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Thursday 1 October 2015

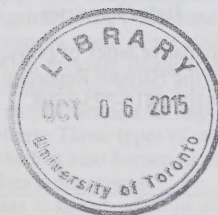
Jeudi 1^{er} octobre 2015

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 1 October 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 1^{er} octobre 2015

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

POLICE RECORD CHECKS REFORM ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LA RÉFORME DES VÉRIFICATIONS DE DOSSIERS DE POLICE

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 29, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 113, An Act respecting police record checks /
Projet de loi 113, Loi concernant les vérifications de
dossiers de police.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to join this debate. I think it's a tremendously important issue to discuss, and I am honoured to be able to share my thoughts.

First and foremost, I must commend the government on bringing forward this bill. It's rare that opposition does that, but this is an important bill. It addresses a very important issue, and I do acknowledge the government's work in introducing a bill that addresses such a serious issue.

I'll just lay out some of the groundwork on why this bill is so important and why this issue is such an important issue. Then I'll move into some of the areas where we can improve it—there is always room for improvement. Let me just lay out some of the groundwork.

According to a report by the John Howard Society entitled *Reducing Barriers for Ontario's Youth With Police Records*, over 4.1 million Canadians—that's roughly 20% of the adult male population—have a record of criminal conviction. In addition, in Ontario, our criminal court system processes more than half a million charges annually. And this is important: About 43% of criminal court cases resulted in stayed or withdrawn charges.

So, it's important to note that the issue of having contact with the criminal justice system sometimes results in convictions, but a large number of people are charged and eventually see those charges withdrawn or stayed. "Non-conviction records can be and often are disclosed on police record checks. These types of records can have

as devastating an impact on young people's employment, volunteering and academic prospects as records of convictions." I end the quote from the John Howard Society.

What we're talking about are non-conviction records. If you are convicted of an offence, you've committed the offence, there is enough evidence that's brought before the court, and after due process takes its course and you have the opportunity to defend yourself, you are then deemed to be guilty. There is proof beyond a reasonable doubt, upon which either a jury or a judge says, "Yes, there is enough evidence here that I am satisfied beyond a reasonable doubt that this person is guilty," and then there is a criminal conviction. In those cases—when there is a criminal conviction—the disclosure that someone has a conviction is appropriate. Disclosing that conviction under our criminal records is appropriate.

The area that we're very concerned about—that many civil liberties activists, many community organizers and many individuals have shared their personal stories about—is non-conviction records. What are those? These involve, according to, again, the John Howard Society—just a brief summary of what police records we're talking about when we're talking about non-conviction records: These can involve calls to 911 for assistance, victimization, mental health crises involving the police, being questioned by the police, arrests and charges that did not result in convictions. Now, it's the last three issues that are of most concern currently, given the concerns that people have raised around carding and street checks.

Let's just quickly talk about carding and street checks. When we're talking about carding and street checks, people are concerned about arbitrary or discriminatory stops that are conducted by the police that result in data being collected, people being stopped and people being discriminated against. When someone is stopped for a discriminatory reason, there is no evidence, there is no connection to what they are doing and a particular incident or some evidence or some complaint. There's no reason, there's no justification to stop an individual; it's completely arbitrary. Those types of street checks, or that circumstance which is also known as carding in Toronto, result in some data being stored.

When that data is stored—first of all, being subject to street checks that are arbitrary and being subject to carding that is arbitrary, in and of itself, is a harm; it makes you feel like you don't belong. On top of that, that harm is compounded by the fact that there is data then stored. If that data is then released in a criminal records search, you've been doubly impacted. Not only were you improperly treated with the first arbitrary detention, but

then the second negative blow to you is the fact that there is data that is being disclosed that has not been proven in court, that has not been tried; the evidence has not been tested.

Whatever that data is, if it is in any way negative, it could impact your future career, whether it's volunteering, whether it's applying to a professional school or whether it's trying to get a job—so, those types of interactions with the police, arrests when you're eventually proven to be not guilty or when those charges are withdrawn.

Mr. Speaker, if you have been arrested, if an individual has been arrested, and then they're charged with an offence, and it turns out there was a mistake: They got the wrong person; the police admit, "Hey, listen, we just charged and arrested the wrong person. We withdraw the charges against you." The fact of that charge and that arrest, that laying of a charge—that any disclosure of that could impact someone's career is so completely ridiculous and offensive, in fact.

We have a principle in Canada and in most nations where there is the rule of law, that you are entitled to the presumption of innocence. In fact, in Canada, this presumption of innocence is protected by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms says very clearly that you are entitled to it—this is one of your rights—that you should be presumed innocent until proven guilty. Now, that presumption, which is one of the hallmarks of any society that is based on the rule of law, is so fundamentally eroded when people who are not even convicted of an offence, who are absolutely innocent—they don't even need the presumption of innocence because they are innocent. When those individuals who have been found not in any way to be guilty, in fact, have not even been charged—that charge is withdrawn—if those individuals are facing barriers and obstacles to employment and to volunteer opportunities, to accessing school, that is so fundamentally flawed; that is such an abrogation of that fundamental principle. So I think it's something that we really need to address.

There are a number of stories I want to share of individuals who have faced some serious issues based on this disclosure. I think that it's important to put a human side to this story. I'll turn now to the great work of the Canadian Civil Liberties Association. They released a report in 2012 which, in a lot of ways, was one of the main reasons why and was one of the motivating factors why this bill is now before this House. The Canadian Civil Liberties Association, in conjunction with other organizations like the John Howard association, raised the issue that they were seeing a number of people being unfairly treated, receiving or facing unfair burdens and obstacles to employment, volunteer and educational opportunities because of non-conviction records. They raised this issue.

0910

In 2012, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association released a report. To follow up with that report, the association released something called *Presumption of Guilt:*

The Human Story. This *Presumption of Guilt* piece was essentially a compilation of stories across Canada regarding what people had faced, the stories of people who had faced burdens and obstacles because of their non-conviction record. I'm just going to quote from the preamble of this follow-up to the report.

"In the time since the release of our first report over 100 Canadians who are struggling with the impact of a non-conviction record have contacted CCLA. We decided to record just a few of their stories." So the following are going to be some excerpts of stories from people who were impacted by non-conviction record disclosure and who responded to the 2012 report by the Canadian Civil Liberties Association. Again, I really want to recognize the tremendous work of CCLA in standing up for civil liberties, not just in this case but in a variety of other areas of great concern. The first story is Gord.

"Gord was a nursing student when he was asked to get a vulnerable sector check in order to complete college placements. His non-conviction record, which was nearly two decades old when it was disclosed on his police check, completely altered the course of his life." His quote is: "You sort of wonder how one group could have so much power to influence your life. Even if you haven't been charged with anything, even if you are innocent, they can still affect you decades later, if they haven't cleared your records. And that's a problem..."

So Gord was a nursing student and faced difficulties in his college placement for charges that, again, he wasn't convicted of. He wasn't even found guilty. These were charges that were withdrawn. The fact that withdrawn charges could impede someone's career in something as important and noble as the nursing profession is absolutely unacceptable.

There's another story; this one is about Robin: "Robin was 18 and pregnant when her male roommates started dealing drugs out of the apartment. She tried to find a new place to live, but before she could move the police came and charged everyone who lived there with trafficking. The charges against her were withdrawn, but her record has followed her, preventing her from pursuing her career and furthering her education."

Again, this is another circumstance. How unfair is that? In the first place, for her to be charged—in some fairness to the police, perhaps, everyone who was in the facilities or the premises were charged, but eventually they realized that this didn't even take going to court. Robin didn't need to defend herself in court because the police looked at the evidence and, in fairness, they realized there wasn't enough evidence to proceed and they withdrew the charges against Robin. Despite that, the fact that those charges were still on her record, that they were disclosed, that she was charged with some drug-related offence—that drug-related offence charge was withdrawn. She still received a barrier. She still was impeded and prevented from furthering her education and pursuing her career. Keep in mind that this is an 18-year-old woman; she's pregnant at the time. The fact that we have someone in this circumstance who is already

vulnerable and on top of that is faced with this severe obstacle is completely unacceptable. It just really shows you the human story of how non-conviction record disclosure can impact someone.

I want to move on to another story just to add the human element to this issue. This story is about Lana. "Lana's abusive ex-partner phoned the police and accused her of assault, twice. After leaving her partner she was unemployed and needed financial assistance to try to pay school application fees. When she first went to Ontario Works, they initially told her they wouldn't even pay for the application for nursing school because there was a chance she wouldn't get a nursing placement while in school."

Her quote: "I'm not guilty, I didn't do anything, it's just someone manipulating the system against me.... That life-long discrimination is just infuriating, for something I didn't do.... It's humiliating. Because I've never, ever, ever, ever, not even close to it, being in trouble—never been in trouble in my life. And now all of a sudden, it's like, why aren't you working? What did you do? There's this whole presumption that I must have done something terribly wrong."

That's the issue here: Though we have this principle of the presumption of innocence, when you are faced with—if you are an employer, if you're someone who's in school administration and you receive an application and on that police record check it says, "charged with possession of a narcotic," "charged with trafficking in a controlled substance," "charged with" some heinous assault—looking at that assault, whether it was withdrawn or stayed or acquitted, there is so much stigma that is associated with that. There's such a negative presumption that flows from that, simply the fact that you were charged. That's why it's so important that that charge not be disclosed in the first place. It's so important, Mr. Speaker, that we don't disclose information that has not been proven in a court of justice, that has not been proven to be true. We can't be disclosing this type of information. It's already difficult enough for people to find a job or to find volunteer opportunities. We don't want to discourage them and, in fact, impede them further, and that is why it's so important that we have this piece of legislation.

Let's take a break from the stories—we'll come back to some more life stories—and talk about the legislation and some of the good things it does and some of the things that we need to improve upon. What's important to note is that the bill offers some guidance in an area that, up until now, has been quite unclear in terms of what the acting principles, the guiding principles, are around when you should disclose and what you should disclose when it comes to criminal records. So it's important that we have this clarity. There has been a lack of clarity up until this point.

Underneath this piece of legislation, there are a couple of really important components. One component is that, upon application for a police records check, the individual who is applying for the police records check has to

provide their consent for the police check to be initiated in the first place. I think that's absolutely important. We don't want to allow circumstances where third parties can make a check, or can order a police records check, without the consent of the individual it involves. That's very important, and that's included in this bill. I think that's an important issue.

In addition, it's also part of this bill, which is an important component, that if there is a police records check that's initiated, the results of it first go to the individual who made the request. So it goes to the individual first and then they have to consent in order for it to be released any further. So that's an important extra protection. I think that's worth acknowledging. It's very important to acknowledge that the bill basically breaks down three types of checks. This is under section 8. They break into three categories: there's a criminal records check, there is a criminal records and judicial matters check and then a vulnerable sector check.

The first check is probably the most common. It's the straightforward criminal records check. The bill makes it very clear that the starting point will be that non-conviction records are not to be disclosed. That's important, and that's a good starting point. I acknowledge that, and I want to recognize that that's something important. Actually, it's also important to recognize that a host of stakeholders were consulted on this bill and did support it, and those ranged from individuals in the police services to individuals on the advocacy side, as well as people who are victims or people who are charged and who are in circumstances where they are impacted by disclosure of non-conviction issues, as well as the CCLA. So those stakeholders were consulted and supported it.

There are, though, a couple of areas of concern. One of those areas is when it comes to the exceptions. Under section 10 of the Police Record Checks Reform Act, there is a headline which indicates "Exceptional disclosure of non-conviction information, vulnerable sector check." Underneath that, under section 10, subsection 2, there are criteria for exceptional disclosure. This is where we have a couple of areas of concern. First off, I acknowledge that there are circumstances where, in exceptional circumstances, there are exceptional cases where there may be an importance, there may be a requirement to release some information that doesn't actually make up a conviction. So in those cases, then, maybe you do have to release occurrences or charges that were withdrawn. There may be some grounds to do so. There may be some reason to do so.

0920

A couple of areas of concern: In the criteria that are listed, it's not clear that the position that's being applied for has to have a connection—that there needs to be a nexus between the position applied for and the entries in the record. What I mean by that is this: We have to keep in mind that this exceptional disclosure circumstance is the disclosure of things that are non-conviction. We're talking about things that people are actually determined by a court of law to be innocent of. They're actually

offences where they may have been the wrong person and the charges were withdrawn. They might have challenged the issues in court and were found to be not guilty. These are incidents that could simply be occurrences where the evidence wasn't tested by a court; there wasn't the opportunity to test the evidence. These are already issues that aren't convictions. And in that exceptional case where there is some reason to be releasing that information, there has got to be a connection between the position you're applying for and the type of records that you have.

What I mean by that is if there are some entries in your criminal record that are not convictions—you've not been found guilty—but they're related to something that's quite troublesome, perhaps something around offences related to children, which we're all very concerned about and are very serious, but again, they're not convictions; you have not been found guilty—if you're applying for a position at an old age home or your work will be involved with elders, but the entries that are non-conviction are related to children, then there isn't really a direct connection between those entries and what you're applying for. It's got to be something that is very connected.

If your entries are for something that involved fraud or fraudulent behaviour with seniors, but you're applying to work with youth, there isn't a connection between fraudulent offences against seniors, which are, again, very serious—but you haven't been convicted. If you want to disclose that information that is non-conviction, that you've not been proven guilty on, you should be entitled to the presumption of innocence. If you are being subject to having that information released, and it doesn't connect to the actual employment or education that you're pursuing, then, again—that criteria needs to be added; it's not included here. That's one issue that I raise.

The second issue, which is even more important, is the criteria for exceptional disclosure. I just want to read from subsection 10(2): "Non-conviction information about the individual is not authorized for exceptional disclosure unless the information satisfies all of the following criteria...."

Subsection 10(1) reads: "This section applies with respect to the disclosure of non-conviction information in response to a request for a vulnerable sector check in respect of an individual."

The criteria that are listed are good criteria, with the exception of the additional point that I raised; however, the mechanism to apply this criteria is not clear. As it stands, the decision-making and the discretion would lie in the hands of the police. While our police officers do phenomenal work in our communities to keep us safe, while front-line officers are essential in our public safety, if police are the body that control or house the data—they have the data; they have the records—and they're also the body that you apply to for whether this should be released or not, and they also have the discretion about whether to release certain information or not, and they also apply the criteria, inherently, it's a system that is not as transparent or as accountable. If the police themselves

are the ones who are making the decision—they have to apply their criteria—then it's not an open system. What I mean by that is if I'm applying and I submit for a records check, the police look at my circumstance and then look at the criteria. They then make the assessment, "Okay, the criteria apply." There is no opportunity for me to say, "Hey, listen, I don't think their criteria apply." There is no way for me to actually dispute that, in terms of having my opinion, to come forward and say, "Listen, there isn't a connection between what you're hoping to release and what I'm doing. The criteria that you're applying don't apply to me." There is no form for that.

What there is is after the case, there is an opportunity for reconsideration; that's what it states. You can request a reconsideration. Again, you're not provided with the reasons for the decision, you're not provided with the manner in which the criteria were applied, so there isn't really that due process.

What BC has proposed, because they recognize that this is a very valid concern—the government in British Columbia created a separate, independent body. That independent body is assigned the task of assessing the risks and applying the criteria, and it is independent from the police services. So there is a level of independence, there is an increased level of transparency and, because it's an independent body making that decision, you have a greater opportunity for accountability and to challenge those decisions if they are inappropriate.

Again, the entire purpose for bringing this forward is because there has been improper use of the existing discretion. The whole reason we're bringing this bill forward is because there's an acknowledgement that in the existing system, records were disclosed in a manner that was not proper and people were severely prejudiced because of it. If we know that that's an issue, the solution has to also acknowledge that if we continue down the same path of allowing all the discretion to be in one group, and not an independent group, then the problem continues. That's an area of concern, and much like the British Columbia decision, I'm suggesting that there needs to be some independence in that decision-making.

The Canadian Civil Liberties Association, as I indicated, released a report in 2012. They also made a series of recommendations. In them, they made recommendations to the provincial, territorial and federal governments, as well as to police services and police service boards, businesses, not-for-profit organizations and third-party record check companies.

Referring to their recommendations around provincial, territorial and federal governments, the CCLA stated, under their recommendation 1.2: "Governments should introduce legislation based on British Columbia's Criminal Records Review Act, establishing centralized bodies to conduct vulnerable sector screening and evidence-based risk assessments. These bodies should provide screening services for all positions that would qualify for a vulnerable sector check."

Now, it's important to note that they included the language "evidence-based risk assessments." Broadly speak-

ing, one of the other problems that was raised by both the John Howard Society and the CCLA was that there seems to be a knee-jerk reaction to criminal record checks. It can't be the case that in every circumstance you need a criminal record check. There has to be some thorough analysis. It shouldn't be the case that anyone can just request that you have to have a criminal record check for any job. That doesn't seem to be a very logical proposition.

What the CCLA and the John Howard Society are recommending is that there needs to be an evidence-based risk assessment. There needs to be a look at: "Is there evidence that suggests that in this particular type of work or this particular type of education, there is a risk that is posed where there is evidence of a certain type of criminal activity?" If there is some clear evidence and that evidence is related to the actual risk assessment, then in that case it makes sense and there should be an assessment. Then, that means we need to actually look at whether there needs to be a criminal records check or not. I think the issue here is that it shouldn't be the case that—what it looks like now is that any job you apply for, there's always an automatic criminal record check. That's a problem.

The other concern around criminal record checks, broadly speaking, was raised by a number of community groups, and one member of our caucus raised this issue as well. It's that there is a cost associated with a criminal record check. That cost is something that often acts as a barrier, in and of itself, for individuals who want to volunteer. First of all, there's a cost, and there's a time issue. The cost is both financial and time-related.

So you want to apply to volunteer in a position in your community—you want to help out, contribute and give back—but the requirement is for a criminal record check. Two issues come up. One is that it takes a long time. You have to follow through a lot of hurdles and a lot of bureaucracy to get your criminal record check completed. It takes a lot of waiting time, sometimes in lines, to get this done. The process is very difficult, and there is also a high cost.

0930

In terms of the actual act, it's information that's stored, presumably by the police, in a database, and the fact that the charges are sometimes so exorbitant, so high, doesn't seem to make sense. It creates a barrier. So if I want to apply to help out in my local community but there is a criminal records check that is going to cost me a lot of money and take a lot of time to process, maybe I don't bother to do it. The fact that some people are precluded from applying for positions like this because of this cost barrier is not acceptable.

So we need to address why there is a cost in the first place. Can that cost be waived if you're applying for a volunteer position? You're giving your time freely. In those circumstances, perhaps the cost should be waived. If you are applying for a job and you are a youth or somebody who can't afford to make ends meet, and you're struggling and you want to find a job to pay some

of your bills, you have to pay money to start earning money. It's difficult in those circumstances. So there needs to be a look at whether—if it's a young person applying for a criminal records check or someone who's applying for a volunteer position, in those circumstances perhaps the charge could be waived.

Also, we have to look at ways of streamlining this process so it can be quicker and people aren't waiting a long time. The member from Welland raised an issue, that sometimes in the health sector there are opportunities that are missed because the wait time is so long. The opportunities are available, but the wait time to get your criminal records check takes so long that you miss an opportunity. That's another issue that has been raised.

So to sum up these last two points, we need to really evaluate whether or not, in terms of provincial leadership, there's a reason to be requesting a criminal records check. In all circumstances, I don't think it makes sense to just immediately need a criminal records check. There needs to be an evidence-based risk assessment: Do we need to look at the risk of this individual in this particular employment? Does it make sense for us to do so? If it does, okay, let's move to the next step and then make that assessment.

Secondly, the other area of concern, broadly speaking, is that we need to look at ways to make it easier to access your criminal record. Employment opportunities for young people, who are already facing some of the highest unemployment in the history of Canada, and Ontario is facing a high youth unemployment rate, well above our regular unemployment rate—we need to make sure that there aren't additional barriers to youth, perhaps waiving the records for youth. And again, the volunteer component: If someone is applying to give their time freely, there needs to be a consideration for perhaps waiving that fee as well.

I want to return again to some other stories around this issue of criminal records checks and why it's so important to address this matter and the real-life stories of people who are impacted by it. I want to share the story of Chris. Again, this is from the CCLA's follow-up to their 2012 report that compiled some stories they'd received of individuals who had faced barriers because of non-conviction records.

"Chris had been accepted as a volunteer firefighter in his small town and was several months into training when he realized that his vulnerable sector check listed him as the subject of a drug investigation. Chris had never even been questioned by the police, much less charged with any offence. He assumes that his name was entered into police databases because he had a friend who was arrested and charged with drug offences—Chris had met the undercover officer who was investigating his friend, but Chris was never questioned by police or charged with anything."

I quote his story: "It's a small town, I mean, all the people I was in class training with, it was a class of 25 or 30, they all know I got kicked off. All the people at the station know I got kicked off. I run into these people on a

daily basis. I feel now like a criminal and I haven't done anything wrong. Or even if I had done something wrong, I've never been to court to prove it. It's like guilty until proven innocent....

"It kind of ruined my chances. My whole plan was getting on, and getting full time—it threw that out the window. Now I'll never be able to be a firefighter."

We have to understand that these are real lives that are impacted. These are people who are faced with losing a career over not having done anything. These are people who are actually innocent, who have not committed an offence. They were the subject of an investigation; in this case, an individual who may have been approached by a police officer but not even questioned. Their name just came up because they were in contact. I don't blame the police in this case. They contacted this individual; that's not their fault, but the fact is that that record was disclosed that he was the subject of a drug investigation when he wasn't charged with an offence, let alone convicted. The fact that, just because he was—in some broad-speaking, vague way—involved in the investigation as someone that the police contacted, for that information to be disclosed, is absolutely unacceptable. The fact that that information precluded him from becoming a firefighter is even more unacceptable.

I want to share the story of Lois: "Lois was trying to board a flight to Los Angeles to spend Thanksgiving with family when she was pulled over by American border officials for secondary screening. She was told she was not able to cross over to the United States because Toronto police had attended her home in 2006 after a 911 call for medical assistance.

"This interview was conducted in February 2013," some seven years later. "Since then the matter has been resolved. Lois is not at liberty to comment further due to a confidentiality agreement.

"To me, this is the kind of thing that needs to have a public airing.... But many people are not willing to be public about it because they fear the embarrassment, they worry about job security.... I think this is something that we really need to look at, because too many people are being hurt—and too many people will continue to be hurt—if we allow this to go unchallenged."

It's important to know that this impacts not only employment, not only educational opportunities; it also impacts something like travel, people going to the States or going to other countries—international travel. When there is the sharing of information, and certain information is allowed to be shared that is not relevant to someone's risk in any way—someone is not in any way convicted of an offence—it should not provide this barrier.

I want to talk about, again, the impact of these from my own experience as a criminal defence lawyer. I represented a number of clients, many of them who were innocent, who were either wrongly accused, or misidentified at the scene. There was very clear evidence that could exonerate them. I personally represented these clients. Great kids: They had a great future and great potential. The fact that they were simply charged with an offence—

they received good representation and were able to be found not guilty. But the fact that they were charged, that those charges were either withdrawn in some cases, or that those charges were eventually acquitted of them, and that they were now going to face barriers to their employment in the future, to me, is something that I can't live with. The idea that people that have such great potential, that could be such great contributing members of our society, people that have so much hope and so many aspirations, people that I've dealt with—I represented them. I got to hear their stories. I got to meet their families. I know that they're good people, and I know that they'll go on to do great things. But I know also that, simply because they were charged, they are going to have greater barriers unless we pass laws that protect them. They're going to have difficulties accessing certain educational opportunities. The fact that they're going to perhaps be looked over or passed over for job opportunities is just not acceptable to me. It's something that's troubling and it's something that needs to be resolved.

There's a larger discussion around barriers that exist and particularly when they exist for people who are already vulnerable. We have a vulnerable sector check, but we also have people that are more likely to be in contact with the police and more likely to get charged. Those individuals are often younger individuals, often racialized, often from lower socio-economic backgrounds, and living in neighbourhoods where there's a higher police presence. It's not because of their own fault, not because of anything they've done wrong, but it happens to be a community that, because of issues of poverty, there's a heightened degree of policing, and they are now more likely to be subject to police contact. People who are already facing systemic barriers, whether it's racism or whether it's poverty issues—they're facing systemic barriers. Those systemic barriers are then augmented or made worse by the fact that they have police contact which results in charges. These charges are maybe acquitted or withdrawn. But they're still going to face barriers. That's what's so troubling to me: It creates a system that's already unfair and makes it even more unfair for them.

That's why we've raised concerns around carding; it's the exact same issue. When there's police contact that can be disclosed and that can negatively impact, like these stories I've shared—people have lost the opportunity to travel, to get employment, to get education, due to information that is stored that doesn't have anything to do with their guilt or innocence. That information being disclosed results in these issues.

0940

In the same way, carding not only allows for one additional avenue for information to be disclosed that might result in some other barriers to employment, volunteering and education, but carding itself—when the act of stopping someone is arbitrary, when the act of stopping someone is discriminatory and when the act of stopping someone in a street check or carding circumstance is not based on any evidence, is not based on any specific complaint and there is no connection between some

evidence and that individual—when that's not present, it's unacceptable to stop these individuals. What it does, Mr. Speaker, is that it further sends a message that you don't belong. It tells people living in their own community, people who live in their own neighbourhoods, that simply for existing, simply for being, simply because you were there, you are not welcome.

People are stopped multiple times in their own neighbourhood for not having committed any offence, for not even being a subject of an investigation. The fact that that practice is going on, arbitrarily and in a discriminatory fashion—often that discrimination is based on youth and based on race—is so unacceptable. It's something that is fundamentally offensive, and it violates our charter. It's something that can't be regulated. You can't regulate a practice that is inherently violating our charter. It can't be regulated, and the government is taking a course of action where they want to regulate this practice. It can't be regulated, Mr. Speaker. If a practice openly violates our charter rights, it cannot be regulated. It is illegal.

The concerns that are raised—there are public safety concerns; there are issues around police investigations. I wholeheartedly support the work of our front-line officers. They have tremendous tools, and they are very capable of using those tools to keep our communities safe. Those tools that exist allow the police to stop individuals, the tools that exist allow them to investigate individuals and, in fact, the tools that exist allow the police to search individuals without a warrant. But there is a requirement that there are reasonable grounds to do so, that there is evidence to do so, that they can articulate a cause, that they can give a reason. When there is a reason present, the police have the ability to do a whole host of things.

The issue that community activists have, the issue that members of the civil liberties associations have, the issue that legal experts have, is that when you have an arbitrary system, an arbitrary detention, arbitrary stops—stops for no reason, no evidence—those are unacceptable. They cannot be regulated. When you have discriminatory stops—stops that are based on simply the colour of your skin, stops that are based on your age, stops that are based on young people hanging out at night—that's not reasonable grounds.

Reasonable grounds are very well articulated, very well laid out through years and years of jurisprudence. There is clear jurisprudence around what reasonable grounds are. We know this. If there are reasonable grounds, if an officer can articulate those grounds, then it's absolutely fine to engage in whatever the tool may be, whether it's an investigation, an investigative stop or whether it's actually searching the individual. If there are grounds, then it's appropriate.

All we're saying, very clearly, is that if there are no grounds, if there's no reason to do so, they should not be stopped. That issue of carding, compiled with the issue of disclosing non-conviction records, is creating a heightened sense that the police are not serving the community. Again, this is not the fault of the police. This is the fault of the government. The government has a responsibility.

The provincial government, in this case, has a responsibility to provide the leadership. They have an opportunity to do so. They have the means to do so. They have the authority to do so. They simply must take that next step and actually act.

So, on this non-disclosure piece, the government has finally taken the right decision and acted—years of various activists raising this concern, years of various legal experts raising it, and various advocacy groups raising this concern, saying that people are being impacted by this.

I think it is really important, as I forgot to note, and I want to get into this as well, the tremendous work of the Toronto Star with respect to this issue. In specific, I want to give a shout-out to the great investigative journalism of Mr. Robert Cribb. Mr. Cribb has released a series of reports around the impact of disclosure of non-conviction records, and I think it's really important to note his tremendous work. He shared a number of stories. I'm just going to share one of those stories.

In an article published June 22, 2014, again by Mr. Robert Cribb, the article reads: “No Judgment, No Discretion”: Police Records that Ruin ... Lives.”

He outlines the story of Andrew and indicates that “Andrew’s career-limiting moment of humiliation unfolded in front of a distinguished colleague in the security line at Pearson International Airport.

“The 42-year-old Toronto area businessman was on his way to a prestigious trade conference in the United States last year that promised valuable networking opportunities for his construction firm.

“He’d prepared for months.

“But it was all ... undermined thanks to a minor contact with a police officer 24 years earlier that torpedoed the biggest business trip of his career and continues to compromise his professional credibility and prospects.”

Mr. Speaker, 24 years ago—I mean, what were you doing 24 years ago? A “minor contact with a police officer” 24 years ago. I mean, it's funny, because we think of what we were doing 24 years ago, but it's not funny for Andrew. The fact that a minor contact 24 years ago is impacting his career in such a significant way is just unacceptable. Like my colleague is saying, it's abusive. It's abuse. This is something that is absolutely unacceptable.

Again, like the other stories we've shared, the individual—in this case, Andrew was “directed into secondary screening for the first time in his many trips south ... waiting 90 minutes in puzzlement until a US border guard asked him if he'd ever been convicted of possessing narcotics.”

He said, “No, sir,” of course; he had not. He would have known that. That's a pretty big offence, possessing narcotics.

“The officer told Andrew that records showed he was investigated for possession of narcotics in 1990 and that, as a result, he was being denied entry to the US.”

Keep in mind, he had never been convicted of a crime. This is simply an investigation from 24 years earlier, and

that investigation precluded him from going to the States. He was never even charged. This wasn't a case where he was charged and then the charges were withdrawn, which also is completely offensive, because he's been found not to even need to go to court to defend himself, but he wasn't even charged in this case. This is a serious issue.

There are a number of other stories. Mr. Cribb went on to talk about something that I initially raised, that Toronto police have experienced a 92% increase in police background check requests in the past five years—a 92% increase over the past five years. So, as I was saying, we need to really evaluate why there is this sudden increase in police record check requests. It shouldn't be the case that you immediately request a police record check for any employment. There has to be some reason for it; there's got to be some basis for it. There has got to be some risk assessment. It shouldn't be just a knee-jerk reaction where if you're applying for a job, you need a record check. Given the fact that it has increased 92% in five years without any justification, there are some concerns here.

Again, if there is a risk that is identified and there is a risk assessment that's required based on some evidence, that's absolutely appropriate, and that's what we need to see. That's why it's so concerning that this trend is increasing towards increased criminal record checks without any reason for them, and people are being precluded from opportunities when they haven't even been convicted of an offence.

Mr. Cribb goes on to talk about the fact that people have had to seek legal representation at a great cost to have records deleted. Again, these records are not even convictions. These records aren't in any way showing criminal guilt. These are records that are non-conviction in nature, but they have to obtain legal representation to get those removed so they can actually move on with their lives. Again, this is something of great concern, and I want to again acknowledge the great work that Robert Cribb did in raising some of these concerns.

0950

He also wrote another article on May 17, 2014. The article is entitled "Canadians Stunned to Learn They Have Police Records, Despite Never Being Found Guilty." In this case, the story is about Chris. He's a 27-year-old construction worker. He "hoped that firefighting was a calling he would one day turn into a profession." He was asked to provide a vulnerable sector check.

The results left him stunned. The check "indicated no charges or convictions." There was a letter attached. It said he was named in a drug investigation. Again, just for being named in the drug investigation, it precluded him from an opportunity to go on to do his life's goal, which was to become a firefighter.

There's significant stigma associated with it. It has gone on to plague him in his own community. Again, not being charged, not being found guilty has resulted in him not being able to pursue his career of choice, and perhaps us missing out on a great firefighter. There are so many stories. The impact that this has is tremendous.

We looked at, to a large degree, career opportunities and educational opportunities. I want to focus on the impact of stigma. The impact of stigma can't be understated. We already know that your sense of self-worth has a significant impact on your ability to be successful in society. One of the reasons why we have raised such a concern around carding and street checks is because that feeling of being stopped in your own community for no reason, just because you're there, sends that feeling that you don't belong.

Similarly, when you are faced with the stigma of having committed an offence, of being treated as if you're guilty of an offence which you're not guilty of, it sends this very powerful message that you are unacceptable, that there's something wrong about you. You live with this feeling. The stories talk about feeling like a criminal, feeling like they've done something wrong when they haven't, and that feeling is so crushing. It limits your ability to succeed. It limits your motivation to be able to be a contributing member of your society. It has such a negative impact, and we can't state enough how horrible and how detrimental it is.

It's that feeling of not being valuable, of not having any worth, of being a criminal when you're not, that we need to get rid of. That's the human story here. That feeling, that limitation that exists, is so powerful and so debilitating that it really needs to be addressed, and that's why this type of law is so important.

In my last eight minutes, I want to move towards some of my recommendations. While I acknowledge that this bill is an excellent step forward—it's not even an incremental step; it's a significant step forward. It's addressing a lot of the concerns that have been raised, and it sets out a very clear guideline that non-conviction records should not be disclosed. That's absolutely appropriate.

It breaks down a number of areas of checks, and the one area I want to address in more detail is when there are exceptional cases, when we determine that in a very specific case, when there are vulnerable people at stake—youth, seniors, or whatever the group may be; that based on their health or age, there might be a greater level of vulnerability—there might be some reason for us to disclose additional information. But this is where we have to be even more vigilant. Basically we're releasing information that otherwise this law says we cannot release.

In those circumstances, I have to highlight how important it is to have an independent body. BC's solution was to strike an independent body. There is a certain cost associated with that, but the benefit is having an independent body allows for a tribunal or independent decision-making to assess whether or not certain information should be released, and to engage in that risk assessment. That risk assessment is vital, because as it stands right now, the discretion is in the hands of the police, the same people—again, it's not their fault, but if they're not provided with the guidelines and the tools to do their job, then they're going to be left with this position.

The police hold the data, and now they're going to have to apply criteria and assess whether or not, with their discretion, these criteria are met and whether or not they should release or not release information. That system inherently is not the most transparent and accountable. We need to look at a more accountable and transparent mechanism, whether it's a tribunal or whether it's another mechanism.

I've consulted with a number of legal experts and community advocacy groups, and individuals that have represented communities and community groups that are impacted by these types of non-conviction disclosures. I am hoping to propose an alternative solution that would look at creating more independence, that would allow for a solution that would take away that discretionary element from the police so that there is a more accountable and transparent way to do it.

One of my suggestions will be that an application can be made to the court, to a judge who is independent, a judge who has that decision-making capacity to weigh the evidence and look at the circumstances and say, "Listen, in this particular circumstance, there is a certain risk; there is a certain number of entries that are non-conviction-related; and there is a nexus, a connection, between the two." In this case, the criteria have been met or have not been met, and they can make that decision.

That process would be open. That process would allow for two sides to be heard. The individual that is requesting the check, that wants to have a criminal record check, could actually raise an argument and say, "Listen, there is no connection between this offence, or this non-conviction record, and the opportunity that I'm seeking, and I don't think it's necessary to release it."

There is an avenue to provide more accountability. That decision also would be subject to appeal, to be reviewed, and that again allows for greater accountability. That's the real issue here with respect to many of the concerns that we have. When the public feels concerned about police services, it's not the police services themselves; it's the lack of accountability and transparency around some of the decision-making. This would be a great step forward in terms of ensuring there is that transparency and accountability.

Taking the decision-making and that discretionary power away from the body that controls the data and putting that in the hands of an independent decision-maker, like a judge, would allow for greater transparency. I think that's a solution that I encourage the government to look at, in terms of addressing this concern—or look at the BC example and look at their criminal records act and how they've set up that tribunal. Both of those circumstances would provide a solution that would provide greater accountability and transparency and would ensure that our solution to a very serious problem doesn't create another problem with respect to this discretion now being at question. So I ask you to consider that.

I also want to highlight that this concern around the independence is something that has also been brought up by the CCLA. In their recommendation, they also request

that the government look at the BC act, so I think it's something that is strengthened by their recommendation.

The John Howard Society took a very interesting angle on police records, and they focused in on the youth. I want to take a little bit of time here to focus in on the youth. We know that youth already are facing some of the highest unemployment rates in the history of Canada at this time. Given that there are already so many barriers for youth to finding employment, the existence of a record or record checks could create an additional barrier. They focused their report Reducing Barriers for Ontario's Youth with Police Records on those barriers that are faced by the youth and really looked at some solutions to that.

Their recommendations included—one of their recommendations, under section 2, was regulating the demand for police record checks.

I'll just read from 2.1: "The provincial government should commit to making Ontario a province that fosters barrier-free reintegration and inclusivity. It should model the efforts" under way in other jurisdictions on "eliminating the government's use of stigmatizing and labelling language, and enacting policies akin to the 'Ban the Box' reforms in the US." They go on to talk about the importance of limiting the ability or limiting the requests for criminal record checks in circumstances where it's just not necessary and of ensuring that youth don't have an additional barrier to actually accessing employment. They also talk about the regulation of the disclosure of the police records. That's something that this bill, I think, will do. So that's important.

1000

Finally, they talk about regulating the use of police records in general. This is something that has been called for by the CCLA as well, and the John Howard Society. It's something around the Human Rights Code. I just want to read it out. I think it's important. It's recommendation 4.1, and it says, "The provincial government should amend the Ontario Human Rights Code's 'record of offences' provision to broaden its definition to explicitly protect Ontarians against discrimination on the basis of any record of offences—which should include all non-conviction police records, mental health police contacts, criminal convictions and records that have been sealed subsequent to a record suspension—with a narrow exception allowed for employers who can demonstrate that a particular criminal record is reasonably and objectively connected to a bona fide requirement of the specific employment or volunteer position being sought."

So this is a step broader. If an individual has a conviction, and it's for an offence that has no—even if they had a conviction. This is another area for us to look at. If that offence has no bona fide, evidentiary connection to a particular risk, a specific risk, whatever the employment or volunteer opportunity—if there is no nexus, and I do have a conviction—then that shouldn't create a barrier for me either. There has to be reason for it to create a barrier. It shouldn't just be that the existence of a criminal record means that forever you are precluded from oppor-

tunities. There needs to be some evidentiary basis for that; there needs to be some reason behind it. That would create a more inclusive society. Just because someone has committed an offence years and years ago and they haven't received a pardon shouldn't mean that their entire future or their ability to contribute to society is forever impeded.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments? The member for Sudbury.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you for seeing me up in the corner here, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to thank the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton for his thorough presentation. He outlined many stories in that presentation. He talked a lot—I think it was halfway through when he talked about cost and time. I think those are two important factors that he was raising.

I do have a question for him that I hope he could address in his rebuttal. This isn't a "gotcha" question; it's more of trying to get an understanding of when you were talking about the independent body that's occurring in BC and some suggestions of what we could do here in Ontario.

We also heard earlier, when you talked about cost and time—when we're talking about time or employment or if it's time for a volunteer organization to get this volunteer, would that process—have you heard in your research—then slow down if we are using that independent body? I think that's important for us to get an understanding of. Especially when we're looking at how this bill is going to change—making things more accountable. It's going to really change some of the unnecessary barriers that citizens have been facing when it comes to non-conviction and non-criminal information, especially mental health records and those types of things being undisclosed in record checks. I'd appreciate to hear some information from the honourable member on that piece.

Also, I think it's important to reassure the honourable member, when he talked about this legislation and he was talking about street checks, that street checks will not be released under this legislation. It's something that I think is important to bring forward as well.

I do appreciate his comments. It was very well thought out. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to add a couple of comments following the remarks of the member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton.

I particularly appreciated the balance that he was bringing to the presentation in terms of the impact of these circumstances that people find themselves in. It reminds me why Justice was always presented as standing with the balance, because there are always arguments on both sides. I think in this case it becomes clear we must appreciate the long history and the long reach of—it's not the law, in the sense of someone having been through the process; it is, in fact, being touched by the process. I think all of us would agree with the fact that the balance is tipped when you are standing in a line to

get on an airline and something 24 years before prevents you from doing that.

It's all the more important to understand this and respond to it in an appropriate manner when you consider the kind of communications tools that people have. When you drive your car up to the kiosk at Fort Erie, the Peace Bridge or wherever, you know that your licence plate has been checked in the computer as you are driving there, and the identification you provide is verified. How much other information is there that is really extraneous? I know of a municipality that requires a police check, and it has nothing to do with vulnerable adults or vulnerable people. We are using these indiscriminately.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to comment on the one-hour lead that the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton just shared with us. I think some of his points will resonate very well across the province. He did quote, at length, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association and the John Howard Society. The John Howard Society, particularly on the issue of youth, has said that the release of non-conviction records is a "total repudiation of the presumption of innocence, a gross distortion of the right to privacy."

I think it's important, and I think he touched on this, to remember that until you lose those rights of privacy, until your rights are violated, you actually don't know how sacrosanct they are. And yet, the stories that he shared—I think it is very important to reflect on those human stories that are the truth, right? These are the lived realities of the people in the province. Inherent in the entire one-hour lead was the reality that there is a power imbalance in society, and we have a responsibility in this House to bring those voices, those marginalized voices, to this place.

The relationship between police forces and the community—in some communities, Mr. Speaker, it needs to be acknowledged that it is very tenuous. When a police officer, in the instance of street checks, as he referenced, asks for personal information—unprompted, a random ask of that information—this happened to the member from Welland, and she challenged that police officer, but she is in the position of privilege. She felt empowered to challenge that ask. When you look at youth across the province, in some communities they feel more vulnerable, and they definitely don't feel that they are speaking from a position of strength.

So I share the congratulations that the member has given the government. This legislation is needed, but let's make it as strong as we possibly can in this House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to have a brief opportunity to comment on the police records check legislation and the comments from the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton. The piece of legislation before the House will prohibit the release of non-criminal information, such as mental health records, and strictly limit the re-

lease of non-conviction information. I think we're all in agreement that that general prohibition is a good thing.

The other thing the act also does identify, though, is that there are circumstances in which there need to be vulnerable sector checks. As Minister of Education, with responsibility for schools and licensed child care, those are two of the circumstances in which, in fact, we require that employees in schools and people who work in licensed childcare centres do, in fact, require criminal record checks and in particular the vulnerable sector checks, because they are dealing with children and have responsibility for children and, by the nature of their work, have a special relationship with children and often will have that relationship in a one-on-one encounter circumstance. In that case, we do require an easy test for figuring out if you can ask for a vulnerable sector record check.

So I would just caution the member that in looking at tribunals and things like that—for example, one thing that we already run into problems with is that all the students who come into faculties of education all over the province each fall need to get a vulnerable sector check before they can go and do their practice teaching in the schools because, again, they're going to have that special relationship. We need to be careful that we don't back up the ability of those people to get their check done quickly in another context of looking at tribunals. We have to find the right balance here.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton. You have two minutes.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you for the comments. I thought they were very thoughtful. I want to acknowledge everyone who responded: the member from Sudbury, the member from York–Simcoe, my own colleague from Kitchener–Waterloo and the Minister of Education.

I'm just going to respond as quickly as I can to all the issues that were raised. I think that, absolutely, having a tribunal process or having a process that requires an application to the court would increase time and cost. It would increase time and cost in circumstances where the result of the criminal record disclosure would preclude you from the job and the opportunity anyway. So it's only in those rare circumstances where the release of information would actually generate a record that could actually preclude you from an educational opportunity or a job opportunity. That impact to your life would be a much bigger cost and a much bigger time loss. In those circumstances, it's worth it.

In cases where there isn't a need for an application, it would be where you don't have a response generated. You receive that response, there is no issue and you go on with your life. It's only when there is a response generated that you perhaps make that application to a court or tribunal. That's a suggestion.

I want to thank the member from York–Simcoe for recognizing that there are circumstances where it doesn't make sense or doesn't seem necessary to have a criminal records check.

I want to thank the member from Kitchener–Waterloo for bringing up the John Howard remark that it really is a repudiation of the presumption of innocence when we have information that's released that generates obstacles for people to pursue education or employment. It really does violate that fundamental principle.

So thank you all for your comments, and hopefully we can create a bill that protects people.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands adjourned until 10:30 a.m.

Interjection: Recessed.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Recessed.

The House recessed from 1013 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Gila Martow: Mr. Speaker, I want to introduce my friend Trevor Kahn. He's here from Richmond Hill, and I believe it's the first time he's been here at Queen's Park since I've been a member. Thank you for coming, Trevor.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have some big visitors with me today. This is Dr. Toth, who is the president of the OMA; Amber Anderson, who is the manager of government relations at the OMA; and Danielle Milley, who is the media relations adviser at the OMA. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I want to take a moment to congratulate the Blue Jays, as they won their sixth American League title. It's been 22 years since there has been playoff action in the city of Toronto. As an Ontarian, I just want to say congratulations and wish them well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll accept that as an introduction to the Blue Jays.

Further introductions? The member from Simcoe–Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I just want to thank all honourable members who participated in the “Do Not Pick On Cody Welton Week” here at Queen's Park this week. Cody is quite a capable member of the PC staff here, and I appreciate the co-operation of all members. Keep up the good work; there are a few hours left to go.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm glad you introduced Cody.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I want to thank all members of the House who showed up this morning for omelettes with the Egg Farmers of Ontario. I got a nice tie out of the process; I'm wearing it proudly.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce today, with the page from Simcoe North, Calvin Kudar, his mother, Beth Kudar; his grandmother Wendy Johnston; his aunt Mary Johnston; and another aunt, Mary Caulder.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome—an actual introduction.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: It's my pleasure today to introduce Jasmine Rajbhandari. She's in the gallery here. Her husband is coming in a few minutes, Kishor Rajbhandari. They are the parents of page Krishaj Rajbhandari, who's here today.

I also want to introduce my constituency office assistant: Jessica Bozzo is here today as well, for her first time to watch question period.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Speaker, I know he's been introduced already; however, he is a constituent of mine and a local family doctor, the president of the OMA, Dr. Michael Toth. Welcome.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I would like members of the Legislature to join me in welcoming Sandy and Ken Bradley, and Howard and Ingrid Sproxton. They bid on a day at Queen's Park and a lunch with their MPP. Unfortunately for them, that's me. Thank you.

WEARING OF PINS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Davenport on a point of order.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear commemorative pins in recognition of Hispanic Heritage Month, which begins today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Davenport is seeking unanimous consent to wear pins in honour of Hispanic Heritage Month. Do we agree? Agreed.

Last call for introductions.

Mr. Michael Harris: I know that B.J. Birdy isn't allowed in our Legislature, but I do want to stand up and congratulate the Toronto Blue Jays for making the play-offs—22 years since winning the AL East division. Congrats, Jays.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): If we can keep that mood in question period, I'm just going to be moving right along.

There are no further introductions. It's now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Acting Premier. The Premier has said she has answered questions a hundred times regarding the corruption and alleged bribery in the Sudbury by-election. The reality: The Premier has failed to give a direct answer to any of those hundred questions.

We will stop asking those questions when we get a direct answer.

Did the Premier give permission to Pat Sorbara or Gerry Lougheed to offer Andrew Olivier a job or appointment in exchange for stepping down as the candidate? Yes or no?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm sure the member opposite would like to correct his record. The Premier has actually answered 107 questions on this topic.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Premier has been open with the Legislature, open with the media—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Answer the question and we'll stop asking.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, come to order.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —open with the public about allegations related to the Sudbury by-election. She has addressed questions dozens of times in interactions with the media.

We have faith in the process—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Renfrew, second time.

Finish.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We have co-operated fully. We will continue to do that.

As this is a matter before the courts, we will have no further comment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, that was just one more spin and one more no-real answer.

Gerry Lougheed Jr. said he took part in conversations with Pat Sorbara and the Premier when they discussed who the Liberal candidate in Sudbury would be. Gerry Lougheed told Andrew Olivier that Pat Sorbara was going to talk to him about appointments in exchange for stepping down. Gerry Lougheed Jr. told Andrew Olivier that the Premier wanted to talk to him.

Did the Premier give her deputy chief of staff permission to offer Mr. Olivier options if he stepped down? Yes or no? No more spin.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I must say I'm shocked that the members opposite continue to—

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Miller: Time for a citizen's arrest.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Carry on.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I'm shocked that the members opposite continue to disregard the law and the conventions of this House.

The Supreme Court, academics and even our own standing order rules make it clear that ongoing court proceedings cannot be discussed in this House. That's no spin.

What the members opposite are doing is they're playing politics with an important issue that is before the

courts, and they are disregarding the constitutional convention of this House.

I tell the Leader of the Opposition to perhaps listen to his own deputy leader when he said—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Acting Premier: The Premier has said that she will co-operate fully. You would have to assume that “co-operate fully” would mean that if subpoenaed to testify, the Premier will testify. Yet again and again, when I’ve asked that question, there has not been an answer.

You may not want to talk about the upcoming trial, but will the Premier testify? It’s hypocritical to say you’re going to co-operate but not testify.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Are you finished?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Will the Premier testify if subpoenaed?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Let me just stop, because I think the Leader of the Opposition should listen to one of his deputy leaders, the member from Leeds–Grenville. I actually agree with him—I agree with him on a lot of things—when in February he said to the government, I am assuming, “Stop interfering in an ongoing investigation and let it run its course.”

The member from Leeds–Grenville is right, and I would suggest—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds–Grenville, second time. The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, you’re warned.

Carry on.

1040

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I would suggest that the Leader of the Opposition listen to his caucus members as well and stop interfering in a court proceeding.

Speaker, the Premier has been open and clear and transparent to this House, to the media and to the people of this province. She has co-operated in this matter fully, and she will continue to co-operate.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. Sadly, it is becoming all too common: Today, the Wynne Liberals slashed funding to physicians yet again. The government cut funding in February and again in April. Today, the Liberals have slashed another \$235 million from patient care. That’s over \$800 million cut this year alone. That means longer wait times and less access to care in Ontario.

How does the Premier explain to the single working mother forced to sit in the ER longer—all night—because she can’t get a doctor for her child? How can they justify that?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite clearly doesn’t understand what this is all about. In fact, by constraining compensation to physicians, that is allowing us to provide more care to patients across the province.

The member opposite is saying physicians should be paid more. We are saying our physicians are already the best paid in the country, and if we have more money to spend in health care, it should be spent on things like home care that people rely on.

We heard from your own caucus a request for more and better home care. That’s exactly what we’re doing. We cannot pay physicians more and make the investments that are necessary in other parts of the health care system.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Acting Premier: The culture of cuts to doctors is not sustainable. With a growing and aging population, Ontario’s health care system is put under immense pressure. The decisions the Liberals make today will impact patients. That’s what this is about. It’s about patients’ access to quality, patient-focused care in Ontario. Patients deserve the type of care they have spent their life putting into the system—hard-earned tax dollars.

Can the Acting Premier explain why her government is making these cuts at a time that we absolutely can’t afford it?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, this is an outrageous accusation that the member opposite is making. He simply does not understand that we are investing more in other parts of the health care system. We are improving care, and we must constrain physician compensation in order to make those investments.

There are no cuts to patient care. We have excellent doctors.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Paying doctors more does not solve the problems in our health care system. We have the highest-paid physicians in the country, many would argue in the world. If you are arguing that physicians should be paid more, then I think you have your priorities wrong.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question again is to the Acting Premier. In this round of cuts the Liberal government is slashing funding to addiction services. We are seeing a 50% cut to addiction monitoring and testing funding. Because of these cuts, there are six addiction clinics on the chopping block in the city of Toronto alone. The next closest clinic is an hour away. The people battling addiction need these services. The risk of falling back into addiction is serious if you don’t have access to these doctors.

Mr. Speaker, where is this government’s compassion? Do the Premier and this government not recognize the need for these clinics? These are real cuts.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, again, if the member opposite thinks the solution is to pay doctors more, I think he is absolutely wrong.

We have a very strong record on health care since 2003. The number of positions has increased by over 5,600 people. We have reversed the brain drain. More doctors are now moving to Ontario than leaving Ontario. Ninety-four per cent of us have a family doctor. We've got 24,000 more nurses working.

The Leader of the Opposition stood with Stephen Harper when he slashed health care transfers. That's costing Ontario patients \$8 billion—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. Yesterday in her response to my question, the Premier said that it was always obvious that her government was going to sell off Hydro One. In fact, she pointed to the fact that New Democrats were asking questions about a possible sale as far back as 2014. Well, she's right. New Democrats were asking questions about the sell-off of Hydro One in 2014 and again in the spring of 2015, just as we are now.

On October 21, 2014, I asked the Premier a direct question about the possibility of the sell-off of Hydro One. Does the Acting Premier remember what the Premier's response was to that question?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Throughout this process, we have been very transparent. We are committed to building the infrastructure that this province sorely needs. That is a commitment. In order to meet that commitment, we do have to look at the assets that this province already holds so that we can reinvest in the kind of assets Ontario needs today.

On April 11, 2014, we publicly announced the creation of an advisory council and their work to maximize the value of Hydro One. On April 11, 2014—our own news release—we put Hydro One in the headline. The headline read: "The Ontario government has appointed a council to recommend ways to improve the efficiency and optimize the full value of Hydro One." It was in our 2014 budget—which, by the way, was introduced twice—and in our platform. The NDP used the same financial estimates that we used; they ran on it too.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, allow me to jog the Acting Premier's memory. In response to a direct question on October 24, 2014—21, rather; the 24th is my birthday—on whether the Premier should sell off Hydro One assets, the Premier said that the leader of the third party "knows that we're not selling off the assets.... She knows that we are keeping these assets in public hands." That's in the Hansard. The Premier said exactly those words. So even after the last election, the Premier was refusing to be straight up with the people of this province

about her true intentions when it comes to Hydro One. Will the Acting Premier admit that this government has never been upfront with Ontarians and commit to a full public review before the sell-off of Hydro One proceeds?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We have been very upfront. I understand that it furthers their argument; the fact that it's not true is a bit of a problem. The plan was in our 2014 budget. We introduced that budget twice. It was in our platform. Let me read from our 2014 OLP platform on page 4: "Our Moving Ontario Forward plan includes a balanced and responsible approach to paying for these investments. The funds will be from dedicated sources of revenue." Asset optimization we pegged at \$3.15 billion or 10.9% of the Moving Ontario Forward plan. Hydro One was mentioned three times in our budget. In the budget, we said that our government will look at maximizing and unlocking value from assets it currently holds, including Hydro One.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: More than 170 municipalities across this province have expressed their opposition to the sell-off of Hydro One. Now Toronto city councillors are joining the chorus of voices against this sale. Municipalities are concerned because they were never consulted on the largest privatization in Ontario's history and because there was no advance warning whatsoever that the sell-off was coming. No matter how much she may say it, the Premier did not campaign on this. Will the Acting Premier admit that the Liberals have no mandate to sell off Hydro One?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think it's clear and I think the member opposite knows, as I've said before, that it was in our 2014 budget twice. It was in our platform. We've been up front with keeping the public informed about the work of the assets council.

Let's remember why we're doing this. We have heard from municipal leaders right across this province that they need more investments in infrastructure, and that is—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

1050

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The number one request from municipalities is funding for infrastructure, whether it's natural gas expansion, whether it's light rail, whether it's rapid transit, rural or northern natural gas expansion, connecting links. The Ontario community investment fund has been a great advantage for municipalities. They want the investments. We have to pay for them somehow.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Acting Premier. Gerry Lougheed Jr. is a loyal Liberal soldier. Mr. Olivier referred to him as a Liberal kingmaker in Sudbury. He has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for the Premier and Mr. Trudeau.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm sorry, but the banter between members while the question is being put is not helpful on either side.

Carry on, please.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: He has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for the Premier and for Mr. Trudeau.

When you talk to people in Sudbury, they know that Mr. Lougheed did the bidding of the Premier and the Liberal Party, and the taped conversations in the bribery scandal reinforce that fact. When will the Premier of this province accept responsibility for her role and the role of people in her office in this scandal, or is the plan now to simply throw Mr. Lougheed under the bus?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What the people in Sudbury are talking about—and I have to say the new member from Sudbury is in very close touch with the citizens of Sudbury. They are actually looking at the record investments that our government has made to improve the lives of the people of Ontario.

The Northern Ontario Heritage Fund: We've invested toward 954 projects in Sudbury. Throughout that process, almost 3,000 jobs were created or retained.

We've spent more than \$70 million expanding Highway 69 from Parry Sound to Sudbury. We're committed to four-laning the 152-kilometre stretch of Highway 69 south of Sudbury and the Maley Drive extension.

We have invested in a new hospital, the Sudbury Regional Hospital. Health Sciences North will receive \$275 million this year. That's an increase of 54%.

Sudbury is doing well—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier needed somebody to push Mr. Olivier aside so that the member for Sudbury could run unopposed. That somebody was Gerry Lougheed Jr., the well-known Liberal soldier. Now that Mr. Lougheed has been criminally charged, the Liberal Party can't seem to distance themselves from him fast enough. The Sudbury Star wrote yesterday that "Ultimately ... responsibility for this farce lies with [the Premier]." We agree. When will the Premier of this province accept the responsibility of her role in this scandal, as well as the role of people from her office?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I find the question quite ironic, because I'm sure the NDP sent thank-you letters to Mr. Lougheed when he gave \$500 in the 2014 election to the former MPP Joe Cimino. I'm sure the member from Nickel Belt also sent him a thank-you letter when he donated to her campaign another \$500 in the same campaign in 2014—not to mention that I'm sure the Ontario NDP sent him thank-you letters and continued to invite him to events when, in 2008, he gave them about \$600, and the list goes on and on. I think the members opposite and the leader of the third party should be very careful in disparaging members of communities when they have accepted donations from the same individual in question.

Speaker, this matter is before the courts. Let's respect that process.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The responsibility for the Sudbury bribery scandal falls squarely on the shoulders of the Premier of this province. The recording of the conversation of Mr. Lougheed and the Premier's deputy chief of staff shows that everything was being done at the bidding of the Premier of this province. The people of Sudbury know that Mr. Lougheed is just a good Liberal soldier who does what he's told by the Premier or Mr. Trudeau.

The Premier accepts no responsibility and her chief of staff continues to operate out of the Premier's office.

My question, again, is this: When will the Premier of this province accept responsibility for her role and the role of the people in her office in the Sudbury bribery scandal?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Again, Speaker, I'm sure they were not saying no to Mr. Lougheed when he was coming to NDP events in Sudbury and Nickel Belt and giving donations to Joe Cimino, to the member for Nickel Belt and to the riding association year after year. All of a sudden, now they're shocked and awed that somehow he was helping various political parties, exercising his democratic right in that process by making sure that his community was served well.

We are very proud of the kinds of investments we made in Sudbury under this government. From health care to education, millions and millions of dollars have been invested in that community so the people of Sudbury can enjoy the quality of life they deserve so much.

I respectfully ask the members opposite to—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Time to stop the smear campaign.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The deputy House leader, second time. There is a very old, ancient trick of using somebody else's mike, and I would ask him not to do that.

Wrap up, please.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I think he invented that trick, Speaker.

I respectfully ask the members opposite to respect the law and the convention of this House and not intervene in a court proceeding.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Acting Premier. Acting Premier, Ontarians with chronic diseases should be concerned about this government's actions today. Every day, Ontario's 28,000 doctors go to work and put patients first, many of them with chronic diseases. For doctors, it's simple: There's no job more important than the health of their patients.

But this government is attacking those very doctors and their patients with heart disease, kidney disease and diabetes as they are seeing their health care cut in order to pay for Liberal scandals. Whether it be the gas plants,

eHealth, Ornge or their failed diabetes registry, these scandals cost Ontarians billions.

You've cut over \$800 million from patients this year alone to fund your scandals. In fact, this past spring, you secretly shifted \$54 million from the federal health transfer to non-health programs.

Mr. Speaker, why is the government cutting health care services to the sickest in the province to pay for their scandals?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite knows better than to ask that question. He knows full well that government has to make choices about where their dollars go. For example, when we saw that Ontarians were paying far too much for prescription drugs, as a pharmacist, the member opposite thought we should not cut the prices of those drugs. My question to him would be, do you still believe that we should now increase the price of drugs and increase the compensation to pharmacists? I don't think so.

We have to make tough decisions. One of the tough decisions we're making is that physician compensation has an envelope. We must live within that envelope. That does not cut patient care. All it does is cut compensation to physicians so we can expand care in other parts of our system.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Speaker, I think the people at home should remember that everything this minister says equates to—she still claims that the gas plants scandal only cost \$40 million. It's all bunk, pure bunk.

Back to the Acting Premier: Your cuts to chronic disease management are not small. In fact, they don't even make sense. Studies show early detection and treatment of complications is key to reducing costs and having healthier outcomes. However, the cuts to doctors will negatively affect treatment for diabetes and heart patients. Rural and northern Ontario will especially be hit hard because specialists are scarce.

This government has cut 35% to doctors who treat heart failure and 33% to doctors who treat diabetes. Wait-lists will grow, the sick will get sicker, access to doctors will shrink and health care costs will skyrocket due to the government's imposed cuts to doctors.

Why are you trying to create a crisis in health care and why won't you return to the table with doctors and seek a solution that achieves—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Stop the clock, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Deputy Premier?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, Ontarians are blessed. We have the finest doctors anywhere. We are enormously proud of the work that our physicians do, and they are paid in accordance with that. The report yesterday from CIHI demonstrated that, on average, a physician is billing \$368,000 a year, the best in the country.

1100

Your argument that we should increase compensation to physicians means we must take that money from somewhere else. I am not prepared—it would be irresponsible to take money out of home care, to take money out of drugs or to take money out of devices like hearing aids. That would be irresponsible.

We had a process in place that was mutually agreed upon between the OMA and government. We followed that process. We brought in our mutually-agreed-upon mediator and then a mutually-agreed-upon conciliator. The OMA didn't like the answer, but, Speaker, we had—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la première ministre par intérim. Speaker, people go into medical school because they want to help people, but right now, this government is bound and determined to paint every single physician in this province as money-hungry and opportunistic, and this is wrong. The actions of this Liberal government are damaging our health care system. They are creating—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Finish, please.

M^{me} France Gélinas: The action of this government is damaging our health care system. It is creating—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): If I could identify the person that said that, I would. When I stand, you get quiet. Even when I sit down.

Carry on.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Do I go? Thank you, Speaker.

The actions of this Liberal government are damaging our health care system. They are creating barriers to care for people who need it the most.

The government can see the damage they're doing to our system, yet they continue plowing right ahead. The government needs to recognize that physicians need to be compensated for the work they do, the care they provide, by working out a deal that doesn't cause further damage to our health care system.

My question is very simple: Why won't this government treat physicians with respect and negotiate?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Today is a very special day in this Legislature. I've heard the member opposite stand up and fight for better home care, for nurse practitioners, for midwives, for PSWs, and today she's standing up and arguing that we should increase compensation for a group of people who do fantastic work but who are already the highest-paid in the country and, arguably, the world. CIHI has recently come out with a report that shows that Ontario doctors are paid the highest in the country, earning \$368,000 a year on average.

There are many demands on our health care system. I will be the first to admit that. But the compensation to our physicians is not in the top 10.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Today, more than 1.2 million Ontarians from across this province are speaking out against the damage the government is doing to patient care and to the health care system. But will the government listen? They've been having some problems with listening to Ontarians lately.

When the government makes unilateral decisions, it never works. They should know that by now. Negotiation is the key to progress. It's not always easy, but it's the way you get things done.

Most physicians' practices are like a small business. Like every small business, they need to follow the rules, but when the rules keep changing, small businesses find it hard to keep up. In this case, physicians may close their practices, putting more of us without access to care.

The question is simple: Will the government agree to go back to the table and negotiate?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We put a very high premium on having a strong relationship with the OMA, because it is through that work that we can really drive the quality improvements that we need to drive in this province. That's a very important relationship.

In the 2012 agreement, we set out a plan on how we would get to an agreement if in fact we couldn't reach it at the table. We negotiated for over a year. The OMA, unfortunately, rejected the offer that was fair to physicians and Ontarians, who need a sustainable health care system.

A jointly chosen conciliator, Justice Warren Winkler, looked very closely at the issue. His report is public. He recommended that the OMA come back and accept the deal. He recommended that the government continue to keep that offer on the table. That is what we have done. The OMA rejected it. We will continue to work with the OMA.

I do believe that we will have a stronger health care system when—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER

Mrs. Cristina Martins: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. I have read a number of articles recently about fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, which is caused by the consumption of alcohol during pregnancy.

Statistics show that fetal alcohol spectrum disorder is one of the leading causes of developmental disability in children across the province, including in my own riding of Davenport. In fact, it's estimated that fetal alcohol spectrum disorder in Canada affects one in 100 live births, or 1% of the population. It can also lead to secondary and tertiary disabilities that require additional

care throughout one's life, care that can end up costing \$1.8 billion in Canada across the health care, mental health and justice systems annually.

Can the minister please update the House on the initiatives her ministry is taking to support those with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to thank the member from Davenport for asking a very important and timely question. I want to assure the member, through you, Speaker, that of course I'm very committed to providing the best possible start in life for our children and youth, and their development plays a very important part in that.

Through screening, assessment and support services, our parent and child development programs help children achieve their maximum potential, including those children suffering from FASD.

We have a number of government-wide programs in place to assist. For example, my ministry provides \$4.4 million to 20 aboriginal service providers and First Nations communities to deliver FASD programming to those communities.

I'm looking forward to providing more details in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I'd like to thank the minister for her answer. But we know that fetal alcohol spectrum disorder is not a developmental disability that affects just one community. It crosses all social, socio-economic and ethnic lines. While we know that there are many reasons why people drink alcohol, we also know that fetal alcohol spectrum disorder is preventable.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, has the government taken any steps to better understand the social and economic impact of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder on Ontarians?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Again, I want to thank the member for the question. My ministry has been working on this tirelessly. I'm very pleased to share with the House that my parliamentary assistant, the MPP from Durham, held 25 round table sessions across the province to engage our service providers, advocates, families, caregivers and especially those people affected directly by FASD. He listened to the challenges and what the priorities are.

Our ministry is also working with an expert group of FASD researchers and clinicians. We have conducted a number of interviews with key informants from across Canada to seek evidence to build our first-ever FASD strategy in Ontario. Of course, we're working with other ministries, including health and education.

We're committed, of course, to providing the best possible care to kids experiencing FASD. I want to again thank the member from Durham for a great job.

PROBATION SERVICES

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is to the Attorney General. Last week, we all heard of the heartbreaking

tragedy that struck the Ottawa Valley, where three women were senselessly and brutally murdered.

Basil Borutski now faces three counts of first-degree murder. Sadly, it was widely known that the accused has a history of assault and harassment convictions. In December 2014, Mr. Borutski refused to sign an order to stay away from one of his victims. This should have raised a red flag about his pattern of violence and his unwillingness to co-operate with authorities, who set those very parameters.

Can the minister tell the House just how many offenders she has released in spite of their refusal to sign their probation orders?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, I cannot answer that question.

First of all, let me offer my deepest sympathies to the victims' families. Domestic violence is something that we take very, very seriously.

1110

The Premier has asked us all to get together, all the ministries responsible, that have an input in this unfortunate situation, and to develop a program that will help to address this situation. We have a program—the PAR program is one of them that tries to address this situation, and it's ordered by the court. They have to follow this program. We are in the process of re-evaluating if the program is serving the causes it needs to serve.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Laurie Scott: The Liberal government always assures Ontarians that their safety would never be jeopardized. Last year, the Liberal government cut the budget to the Victim Crisis Assistance and Referral Services, and now the Partner Assault Response Program has been cut, which the minister just referred to.

In Renfrew county, there's actually only one single probation officer who visits the area once a week. He is very overworked. The Liberal government seems far too comfortable with leaving survivors of assault in precarious and violent conditions. This government needs to take a real, hard look at what happened to those women. How can the Attorney General assure Ontarians that offenders, especially those with a history of violence, will be more closely monitored?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'll redirect the question to the minister of women's issues.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'm glad that this question has been raised. Unfortunately, it was a terrible tragedy, and both the Premier's office and myself did reach out to the executive director of the sexual assault centre in Renfrew county and we thanked her for her presentation recently at our permanent Roundtable on Violence Against Women.

As I mentioned in yesterday's question period, the Ontario Women's Directorate has provided a number of significant investments to raise awareness of domestic violence and to support victims. I'll also mention today that the Ministry of Health is investing over \$1.1 million a year for the next three years in hospital-based sexual

assault and domestic violence treatment centres—very focused on counselling.

This year, we're making legislative changes to allow women to break residential leases when fleeing domestic violence, and there are other investments to follow.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Acting Premier. Despite the talking points from the government House leader, the Premier could deny involvement in the Sudbury scandal if she feels so strongly about it. Instead, the Premier is letting Mr. Lougheed take the fall not only for her but for her deputy chief of staff and the member for Sudbury. People in Sudbury know that Mr. Lougheed did the Liberal Party's bidding. The Acting Premier knows this as well because she was a Liberal campaign co-chair.

Will the Premier and the people in her office accept responsibility for their roles in this scandal, or will she just let the loyal soldier take the blame?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Well, Speaker, I'm surprised to hear the member, the deputy leader of the NDP, mentioning Supreme Court reasoning as talking points. I'm sure the justices of the Supreme Court will really appreciate the characterization of their reasonings in the Tobias case from 1997 as talking points.

Let me restate what the Supreme Court said in that case, and I quote: "A well-known rule of parliamentary practice holds that no member of the House of Commons should comment upon any matter that is pending before the courts."

Speaker, with all due respect to the member opposite, that's not a talking point. That is a principle of law that has been affirmed by the Supreme Court of Canada, and I urge the members opposite to respect that convention.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Gerry Lougheed raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for the Premier and for Justin Trudeau. He met with the member for Sudbury to entice him to abandon his principles and run for the Liberal Party. Mr. Lougheed was asked to make those tough calls on behalf of the Premier. As a result, he's now facing criminal charges.

But it was clear that he was just doing what he was told. The Premier was the one who is prepared to do anything to win. The responsibility for this entire mess rests on her. Will the Premier finally accept responsibility for the actions of the people under her command?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Clearly, Speaker, the member opposite is bitter because he didn't get a cheque from Mr. Lougheed. Mr. Cimino got a cheque from Mr. Lougheed. The member from Nickel Belt got a cheque from Mr. Lougheed. The Ontario NDP's Sudbury NDP has gotten multiple cheques from Mr. Lougheed. The federal NDP riding in Sudbury and the federal NDP MP have continued to receive cheques from Mr. Lougheed. I guess

that's why he's asking these questions. How come he didn't get a donation from Lougheed?

Speaker, these questions are politically motivated. They are interfering in a court proceeding. They should respect the convention of this House and not intervene in a matter that is before the courts.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question. The member from Davenport.

FIRST NATIONS

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, come to order.

Carry on.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. Last month, Premier Wynne and Minister Zimmer met with aboriginal leaders here at Queen's Park for the signing of a historic political accord. The accord provides a platform for First Nations and the province of Ontario to work together on common priorities.

I'm proud to be part of a government that is committed to working with aboriginal partners to achieve real progress towards developing improved outcomes for the First Nations people, and creating prosperous, healthy and strong communities.

The political accord marks a momentous moment for our government and its commitment towards mutual co-operation. Mr. Speaker, could the minister tell us about what the signing of this political accord means for all of Ontario?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before you start, I apologize to the member. I incorrectly identified the member from Barrie.

The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. David Zimmer: I'd like to thank the member for Barrie for that question.

Speaker, on August 24, I had the privilege of joining our Premier and newly elected Regional Chief Isadore Day for the signing of the political accord. The signing of this accord allows an opportunity for several things:

—further reconciliation between First Nations and Ontario;

—a strengthened political relationship with First Nations;

—a commitment to discussions on topics of common priority, such as resource benefits sharing and the treaty relationship; and lastly

—the creation of a foundation for self-government initiatives for First Nations.

Speaker, this accord presents a significant milestone for both parties and I am honoured to have been a part of the process. I'm looking forward to continuing our government's work with First Nations leadership to continue to cement our relationship.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: It's wonderful to hear that our government is doing such great work to build ties between the government and First Nations peoples in Ontario. I would like to thank the minister for his hard work to negotiate this accord with our First Nations partners. I offer my congratulations to the minister and Premier Wynne for working so hard to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I'd like to thank the minister and the Premier for working so hard to ensure the accord came to fruition.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please tell this House what the next steps for our government are in working with the First Nations people to build a stronger, more prosperous Ontario?

Hon. David Zimmer: Speaker, the signing of the political accord is but the first step in a new, renewed co-operation between the government of Ontario and our First Nations. There are many further steps to come.

The signing of the accord will help us work with First Nations to implement the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, including education and promotion of aboriginal history and culture. It will help us develop a new treaty strategy to facilitate constructive engagement on treaties, to revitalize existing treaty relationships, and promote improved social and economic outcomes for our aboriginal peoples.

1120

Negotiating this accord has been a positive experience. It has fostered a positive dialogue that I hope and I know will continue into our future dealings with the aboriginal leadership. I am proud of my ministry's role in this historic agreement and the Premier's leadership to committing our government to closer—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

FEDERAL ELECTION

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Acting Premier. Apparently our Premier missed the Integrity Commissioner's warning to all MPPs about participation in the federal election and partisan use of government resources.

Being Premier is a full-time job, yet since the election she has ignored the commissioner, posing for more pictures with Justin than working on the priorities of Ontarians. While 800,000 elementary students are impacted by strike action, she's dancing with Justin. While they're suspending Peel breakfast programs, she's breaking bread with Bill Blair. While other Premiers keep their distance, this Premier blurs lines on partisan promotion.

Speaker, it's one thing to have a horse in the race; it's another to spend our resources to push it over the finish line. Can the Acting Premier tell us why the part-time Premier continues to flout the commissioner's warning and use provincial tax dollars to get her favourite candidate elected?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, let me say that our Premier is the hardest-working person I have ever had the opportunity of working with. The energy that she demonstrates—she works so hard every moment of every day. She is a phenom; I don't know how she does it.

Yes, it's quite clear that—

Interjection: Superwoman.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Superwoman: I agree. She is a superwoman.

This election is a very important election for Ontario. The current government has made it very clear that they are not interested in working with this province. It took the Premier over a year to get a meeting with the Prime Minister. One would think that the Prime Minister of Canada would be happy to talk to the Premier of Ontario any time she wanted to do so.

The federal government—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —has tried to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Before we begin, I'd like to bring the temperature down a little bit and try to stay focused on government business. Thank you.

Mr. Michael Harris: Back to the Acting Premier: The Premier's bad habits are rubbing off on her caucus colleagues. Her members now think they can parade around, promoting their federal Liberal buddies at Ontario taxpayer funding announcements, while staff campaign on the provincial taxpayer's dime.

While the Premier is on Justin's stage, there's the Kitchener Centre MPP and the minister—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Mr. Michael Harris: While the Premier is on Justin's stage, there's the Kitchener Centre MPP and the Minister of Agriculture handing out Ontario government cheques in my riding as they pose for pictures, shoulder to shoulder with a local federal Liberal candidate—provincial government announcements utilizing provincial taxpayer resources to arrange and execute, and there's the federal candidate toasting with the MPPs and grant recipients.

Speaker, I've asked the Integrity Commissioner to investigate the actions of the Kitchener Centre MPP and the minister. While we wait, will they do the right thing, rein in partisan politicking and get the government back to working for the people of Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, we believe it's our job to stand up for Ontarians, and that's exactly what we're doing. We need a new government. We need a new partner. We need a new kind of leadership in Ottawa. We need—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We need a partner that will work with us to build more opportunity and more security for Ontarians.

We ran in the last election on our Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. The Prime Minister and the federal finance

minister have done everything they can to prevent us from building that kind of retirement security. We want to move forward on building a pension plan, so that Ontarians can retire knowing that they have enough income—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Acting Premier. It's all the way back from 2010, and Ontarians are still looking for an answer.

In 2012 your government, the Liberals, committed to a cap of executive salaries, but earlier this week Ontarians learned that the executive salaries at the provincial community care access centres went up by 27% in four years.

The week before that, we learned that most of the executives of the Pan Am Games were to receive performance bonuses that would double their salaries, for simply doing their jobs.

Speaker, the vast majority of Ontarians find this offensive.

My question is this: When will the Liberal government stop the bonanza and cap public CEO salaries?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, this is a bit rich, coming from a man who is in a party that voted against Bill 8, the broader public sector compensation, accountability and transparency act. They voted against it, and now they're not happy with our progress on it. We would have been further ahead if they had not triggered that election. Remember that election, Speaker. We had introduced the bill. We would have had that bill passed if you hadn't triggered that election.

We are moving forward. It has been proclaimed. We are doing that work now to develop those caps and those compensation frameworks within the broader public sector. That work is happening. We are doing it in a thoughtful way. We would have been further along in this exercise had you supported it in the first place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: A bit rich? There's a whole bunch of people getting rich under your watch. Just one, for example: Do you remember the guy who used to run Hydro One? He used to get paid \$750,000. Now we find out, because we got the FOI, that this new CEO who's being hired is going to get four million bucks—talk about getting rich.

Our party is putting forward a bill today under—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I hate to do this, but—a reminder that you're talking to the Chair. Third person, please.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you, Speaker.

Again, I say that we as a party, the New Democrats, today are putting forward a private members' bill that would cap CEO salaries at two and a half times the price of what the Premier gets. That is only fair.

I want to know: Are you guys prepared to do the right thing and move on capping CEO salaries so that we can get some justice in this world and we don't have people getting rich on Liberal lands?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, there is no question that Ontarians deserve a very clear rationale as to what people are getting paid and why they are getting paid that. We believe in that. That's why we introduced legislation that accomplishes exactly that.

I look forward to speaking to the member's bill this afternoon.

I can tell you that I'm happy to report on the progress we've made since that bill, Bill 8, received royal assent. We are collecting that full compensation information from organizations right across the broader public sector. We are covering everything from sabbatical pay to bonuses to health benefits. We are capturing all compensation. We are doing our homework. We are doing this in an evidence-based, thoughtful way so that we can create reasonable compensation caps while we manage those public dollars.

I look forward to the debate this afternoon.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Granville Anderson: My question is to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. Last week, they updated the House on actions our government has taken to strengthen the real estate sector. This is an important priority, but buying and selling only makes up part of a homeowner's responsibility.

The houses in Durham have a lot of character and vary greatly from place to place, from suburban in northern Bowmanville to cottages on the water in Caesarea to older farm homes on lots of land up near Zephyr.

So many Durham residents are getting creative and resourceful and looking to renovate their homes through work with our many quality independent contractors. Ensuring a level of accountability in this sector is thus extremely important to Ontarians.

Can the minister please speak to our government's record in protecting consumers on home renovation projects?

Hon. David Orazietti: While I could probably turn around and give the answer, I want everybody to hear it, so here it is.

I want to first thank the member from Durham for asking about an important consumer protection issue.

1130

Our government is committed to protecting Ontario homeowners and has a strong track record, through the Consumer Protection Act, to ensure a number of things take place:

- that Ontarians have a 10-day cooling-off period for any contracts that they enter;

- that the contractors must provide consumers with estimates on the services and stay within 10% of that initial estimate;

- Ontarians have a right to cancel a contract if services are not commenced within 30 days of the promised date; and

- that consumer agreements disclose all of the details and all mandatory provisions clearly.

Speaker, we've enforced these protections consistently. Several home renovation companies, unfortunately, have been prosecuted for violating the act. We also created the Consumer Beware List to allow Ontarians to access the histories of these organizations with unscrupulous practices.

Speaker, we continue to work to strengthen consumer protection measures in the province. I look forward to providing more information in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Granville Anderson: Thank you, Minister, for updating the House on his ministry's work in this area. Ensuring Ontarians are able to maintain and improve their homes without subjecting themselves to unscrupulous behaviour is important, and my constituents will be glad to hear that there are protections in place.

Many of the problems that necessitate renovations, however, stem from long-term issues with homes that people buy. A home in Zephyr, for instance, may be much older and have drainage concerns, or a slightly newer home in Courtice could get a crack in the foundation, so I always advise homebuyers in Durham to protect their investments by hiring a home inspector before purchasing. However, valid concerns have been raised to me about reliability in the home inspector profession. Can the minister please inform this House on how our government is adding accountability to this sector?

Hon. David Orazietti: Thank you, again, to the member from Durham. Presently, we are working with the home inspectors as an important profession, and certainly educational, financial and legal standards are important to put in place. That's why our ministry established a panel of experts to review that particular profession.

Last year, the panel submitted its report, *A Closer Look: Qualifying Ontario's Home Inspectors*, containing 35 recommendations. Some of those included mandatory licensing for home inspectors; professional competencies and education; technical standards; a code of ethics; mandatory insurance coverage for errors and omissions and standards regarding content; and the quality of home inspector reports, contracts and disclosures, all to be improved from that report.

Public feedback was very supportive of these recommendations, and my ministry is committed to moving forward to develop a framework to help regulate this profession. I'm pleased with our government's record on listening to consumers on this issue, and we look forward to updating the House on more progress in the future.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mrs. Gila Martow: My question is to the Acting Premier. This government is trying to squeeze millions of dollars out of the city of Toronto by appealing the prop-

erty tax assessments on several provincial properties in what the Globe and Mail called a “bizarre manoeuvre.” Mr. Speaker, it’s certainly bizarre that this government is fighting its own property tax assessment system. Whether it’s Queen’s Park, Osgoode Hall or even Ontario Place, this government seems to be saying that their own system is wrong all across the city. How does this government explain fighting its own system and, if MPAC is so completely wrong in their judgment, how does the Premier then expect every other property owner in the city to accept their own property tax assessments?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Deputy Premier?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Let’s be clear: MPAC is not a provincial crown agency and they receive no provincial funding. They’re a not-for-profit corporation funded entirely by Ontario’s municipalities and, as an independent corporation, any decisions on operational matters are made by the management and board of directors of the corporation. Throughout Ontario, any property owner can appeal an MPAC assessment to the Assessment Review Board. The process is in place to protect businesses, to protect consumers and to protect municipalities as well. Infrastructure Ontario is following through for the benefit of the taxpayers of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Gila Martow: Again to the Acting Premier: Mr. Speaker, Ontario taxpayers deserve an organized government where the right hand knows what the left hand is doing. This government is known for its money-wasting scandals and incompetence. Now they are so desperate to pay for their scandals, they’re trying to take millions away from the city of Toronto from payments as far back as 17 years.

Is the Premier trying to balance her budget at the expense of the city of Toronto by claiming mistakes and mismanagement of a property tax assessment system which is this government’s responsibility?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I think we all recognize that Infrastructure Ontario manages thousands of Ontario-government-owned properties on behalf of the people of Ontario. We recognize that we must be prudent and responsible in managing those properties for the benefit of the people of Ontario and taxpayers.

Municipalities have requested the province to facilitate a review of MPAC—and, by the way, my then parliamentary assistant, the outstanding Mr. Del Duca, did that review to the benefit of the people of Ontario in order to ensure that the process is in place to protect those interests. In an effort to be a prudent and fiscally responsible manager of these properties, they conducted an ongoing due diligence, and that’s the way it should be, Mr. Speaker.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just want to correct my record. I said that the salary cap would be two and a half times; it’s actually two. I’d like to correct my record.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All members are allowed to correct their record. That’s a point of order. Thank you.

The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound on a point of order.

VISITORS

Mr. Bill Walker: I’d like to welcome Patrick Jilesen, president of the Bruce County Federation of Agriculture and now newly elected director-at-large with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and Thea Strassen, who is visiting Canada as a student from Germany, fulfilling her required international work experience for her degree in agricultural science. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

Ms. Harinder Malhi: I’d like to welcome today Rajinder Kaur, who is here all the way from India joining us. She represents a charitable organization in India called Prabh Aasra trust. Joining her are Sunny Gill, Sandy Grewal, and Sukhwinder Mann from the Sahaita organization. Thank you for joining us today.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I’d like to introduce Dr. James Ellison, a psychiatrist from Nottingham, England, and the cousin of my executive assistant, Steve Shapka. He is joining us at Queen’s Park today. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no deferred votes. This House stands adjourned until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1137 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Gila Martow: I’m happy to introduce once again—he’s back for the afternoon, I guess he enjoyed the morning so much—my friend Trevor Kahn from Richmond Hill.

MEMBERS’ STATEMENTS

SUKKOT

Mrs. Gila Martow: Sukkot is a Jewish holiday that takes place five days after Yom Kippur. Historically, Sukkot commemorates the 40 years which the children of Israel spent wandering the desert, living in temporary shelters, or booths, after fleeing slavery in Egypt over 3,000 years ago. Agriculturally, it is a major harvest festival with an abundance of fresh fruit, vegetables and nuts.

Over the seven-day holiday, the Jewish people are expected to eat all their meals in a sukka. When I was a child, everybody’s sukka looked pretty much the same: plywood walls with leafy branches for the ceiling. It was the children’s job to do artwork to decorate the sukkas, which are placed in backyards all across the province and country, and around synagogues as well.

Sukkot is not just about gathering food from the harvest; it's a week-long celebration spent gathering with friends and relatives. Last night, my family and I had dinner in Rabbi Janowski's large sukkah in Thornhill.

I just want to finish with a quick joke. Imagine the first Jewish President of the United States calls to invite his mother for Sukkot, but she tells him, "I don't like to travel." "Come on, Ma, it's going to be great. I'm going to send Air Force One to pick you up." "I'd really rather not." "Ma, there will be a limo to meet you at the airport." "It's really much too tiring." "Ma, we'll have lots of big-shot politicians and famous celebrities for parties at the White House sukkah." "All right, I'll go." When she returns, her neighbour asks where she went for Sukkot. "To one of my son's." "The doctor?" the neighbour asks. "Nah, the other one."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Jocularly.

EDUCATION

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I rise again completely dismayed at the status of our education system under the watch of the current Liberal government. There is no question that this system, under the watch of the Liberals, is in complete chaos. We only have to look at how they're treating our education workers. They won't bargain in earnest with them. They had to file a grievance, a charge of bad faith, to finally get this government to return to the table to bargain with them.

In fact, the Liberals' very own budget states that they are committed to cutting \$500 million from education by 2017. They are well on their way. They have five schools in my area—Harrow Public School, Harrow high school, General Amherst, Kingsville high school and Western Secondary School—that are on the chopping block. These are schools that are foundational in our communities. You cannot simply warehouse students in rural Ontario and expect to get the same results. These are small community schools; they are the lifeblood of these communities.

I'll tell you that the two of them that are most precious to our community are Harrow high—they've been fighting for their high school for years and years—and Western Secondary, which is the only vocational school anywhere from Windsor to Sarnia that you'll find. They have an amazing program there: industrial kitchen, shop, metalworking. This is where you're going to train those workers of tomorrow, but you're going to cut that school.

Here's a warning: You're going to have parents and community members chain themselves to the door to protect those schools.

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I rise today to kick off the first-ever Hispanic Heritage Month in Ontario. This past May, my first bill as MPP, Bill 28, An Act to proclaim the month of October as Hispanic Heritage Month, was

passed in the Ontario Legislature. By proclaiming the month of October as Hispanic Heritage Month in Ontario, our province will recognize the rich contributions of Hispanic and Latino Canadians to our social, economic, political and multicultural fabric.

I'm very proud that Ontario is home to more than 400,000 Canadians of Hispanic and Latino origin. As early as 1914, Canadians who originated in Latin America and Spain began immigrating to the province, and today the Hispanic-Latino community is one of the fastest-growing and most diverse groups in our province. I'm truly humbled to personally represent 10,000 members of the Hispanic-Latino community in my riding of Davenport.

Whether you are a new immigrant to Ontario or a second- or third-generation Canadian, it means something to belong to a cultural community. It is important for us to be proud of our roots.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to urge all members to join me tonight for a reception in rooms 228 and 230 to recognize and celebrate the first Hispanic Heritage Month in Ontario, and to pass by room 212A for an exhibit showcasing art from the Hispanic and Latino community.

I'm truly grateful that I was able to make Hispanic Heritage Month a reality in Ontario. Muchas gracias.

MUSLIM COMMUNITY

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm pleased to rise today and recognize the important role the Muslim community plays in the shaping and building of the free, peaceful and pluralistic province we all have the privilege to live in. The Muslim community does amazing work to enrich our beautiful province, and I commend their continued efforts to promote cultural understanding and harmony.

I had the privilege of attending an Eid celebration in Mississauga recently, together with the leader of the official opposition, Patrick Brown, where we met with many community leaders and had an opportunity to learn more about Muslim culture and their leaders' efforts in building greater understanding and unity across our diverse communities.

I also had the privilege of attending the Canada Pakistan Business Council awards, which highlighted the positive economic impact of the efforts of a very entrepreneurial culture. This of course extends to the social and community benefits that our communities, province and country enjoy as a result of the efforts of the Muslim community.

This month we celebrate Islamic History Month in Canada, a celebration of the rich history of a civilization. Islamic History Month in Canada gives the Muslim communities throughout the country an opportunity to share the rich heritage of the Muslim world, the contributions made by Muslim scholars and inventors, and the valuable stories of Muslim people, who now make up over 25% of the Earth's population.

On behalf of Patrick Brown and the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party, I applaud the Muslim com-

munity for their great efforts and contribution to our great province and our country.

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

Mr. Han Dong: Today, Chinese Canadians across the province celebrate the 66th National Day of the People's Republic of China. Since 1949, China has undergone tremendous transformations. Today, it is one of the world's most influential nations and drives the second-largest economy.

In 1999 the Chinese government expanded the celebrations by several days to give its citizens a seven-day vacation, which is also known as a golden week. The golden week was intended to help the tourism market, make long-distance family visits and improve the standard of living. An estimated 28 million Chinese travelled during the first National Day golden week in 1999. In 2007, this number had increased to over 120 million people.

This has a tremendous impact on countries like Canada, specifically Ontario, where a lot of Chinese families have settled. In fact, I have four friends from China touring Ontario this week.

Canada and China's strong relationship is the work of many visionary pioneers. Some 45 years ago, Pierre Elliott Trudeau led the first official visit to China. In 1985, Premier Peterson signed a friendship accord with Jiangsu province, and last year, the Premier, of course, led her delegation to China, which resulted in \$966 million in foreign investment.

Today, as a member representing Chinatown and of Chinese Canadian heritage, I would like to say happy birthday, China. I would like to invite all members of this House to join us on the south lawn for the flag raising at 4:30 p.m.

SEAN JACKSON

Mr. Tim Hudak: Sadly, Ontario's credit union system and the Niagara community at large have lost a true champion, with the recent passing of Meridian Credit Union's founding CEO, Sean Jackson. I know my colleagues here who knew Sean will join with his wife, Jo-Ann, and their daughter Kailene in mourning Sean.

I want to use a moment today to celebrate his contributions to the province, to the credit union system and to the Niagara community. He's been remembered by people who knew him and worked with him as having an incredible passion for people—it's what drove Sean's business success, his leadership style and his exemplary community work, and it's a quality in Sean that I got to know over many years as a Niagara MPP that I admired personally and saw in action.

1310

Described as a one-of-a-kind leader, Sean joined our credit union in 1983 and within 10 years had climbed the ladder to become its CEO. When it merged with HEPCOE Credit Union in 2005 to form Meridian, Sean

became the first Meridian CEO and saw the company through exponential growth to become Ontario's largest credit union.

Under his leadership, Meridian became one of Niagara's most generous corporate donors, supporting many community initiatives, including scholarships and partnerships with charitable organizations.

His generosity didn't end there. He led the Niagara Community Foundation as a founding director, as a leader in the Hotel Dieu hospital, past vice-chair of the United Way campaign, and worked with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Niagara.

I have one last thing. They have actually named a scholarship after Sean Jackson as well. It's a commitment to community scholarship. It will recognize, like Sean, an Ontario student who has a big heart, who gives back to the community and also excels academically. What a fantastic way to recognize Sean's legacy in the peninsula.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Paul Miller: I have spoken about US Steel many times in this Legislature. I've repeatedly urged government ministers to act. I've spoken at rallies in support of the workers and pensioners. I have twice introduced legislation to strengthen the province's pension protection fund.

US Steel bought Stelco back in 2007 with government assistance contingent on its promises to maintain production and jobs. It has broken those promises again and again, enabled by the federal government, and now it brazenly threatens thousands of Ontario jobs and pensions. It is a disgrace that US Steel intends to suspend all obligations to pay post-employment benefits—health, medical, dental and life insurance—in order to pad the pockets of their US parent company.

Earlier this month, it transferred many of its Canadian contracts to the US plants. Now it says its loss of contracts—which it caused—means it's too poor to meet its obligations. It wants to stop paying municipal property taxes as well. It wants to stop paying post-employment benefits—health, medical, dental and life insurance—a slap in the face to the retirees who have suffered tremendous health difficulties because of their work. These benefits are depended on by retirees like people who have spent 30 to 40 years in the industry, in many cases, giving their all to a company in a town that had always been proud of its role in the steel industry. These benefits are deferred wages negotiated through collective agreements. They're not handouts; these were negotiated over the years.

Speaker, this is a disgrace. This is also going to happen in many other situations in our country if we don't lock down this situation.

HUMBER RIVER HOSPITAL

Mr. Monte Kwinter: This morning, I had the honour and privilege to stand with Premier Wynne, Minister

Hoskins, Minister Sergio, MPP Albanese, and with Paul Allison, Dr. Rueben Devlin, Barb Collins and Don Loeb of Humber River Hospital, when I attended the official ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new Humber River Hospital, which is located in my riding of York Centre. The hospital will be fully operational as of October 18 and will service the communities located in the northwest GTA.

Humber River Hospital's redevelopment plan, which was approved by our provincial government, saw the official groundbreaking ceremony take place on December 2, 2011. Since then, 1,300 dedicated and skilled workers diligently worked each day, every day, to ensure that the hospital was completed on time and on budget.

This state-of-the-art facility is North America's first fully digital hospital and will focus on using the latest technology to treat patients more efficiently and effectively. The 1.8-million-square-foot hospital will offer greater access to high-quality acute care hospital services, have reduced wait-times, expanded emergency services and modern diagnostic equipment for better patient diagnosis and treatment. In addition, it has updated its infectious disease containment systems to monitor and prevent a broad range of infections.

As MPP for York Centre, I take great pride that this project has finally been completed because I know the immediate, enormous and positive impact it will have on the surrounding communities. The new Humber River Hospital will revolutionize how health care services are delivered in York Centre and beyond and is yet another shining example of how the Wynne government is committed to meeting and surpassing the health care needs of Ontarians.

ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER

Ms. Soo Wong: I rise today to talk about attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, or ADHD, a neurobiological disorder and the most common childhood mental health condition.

October is known as ADHD Awareness Month, and I would like to raise public awareness of this lifelong mental health issue currently affecting more than one million Canadians. It is estimated that ADHD affects one to two children in every Ontario classroom and four out of every 100 employees in the province.

Recognizing the seriousness of ADHD, the Ontario government has invested almost \$900 million in mental health services since 2013. In 2014, the government provided \$440 million specifically to the children and youth mental health sector.

Across the province and in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt, there are a number of individuals and organizations working tirelessly to support individuals with ADHD and their families every day. I'd like to recognize them: Heidi Bernhardt, a resident of Oak Ridges—Markham and a constituent of the Minister of Community and Social Services, Helena Jaczek, for her

work and leadership with the Centre for ADHD Awareness, Canada; and Catherine Chan and her colleagues at the Hong Fook Mental Health Association, for helping individuals overcome cultural barriers to access mental health services.

With October being ADHD Awareness Month, I encourage Ontarians to increase their awareness and share the message about ADHD.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Scarborough—Agincourt on a point of order.

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I apologize to the members; I have some visitors from the ADHD community who are visiting the Legislature. I'm going to welcome them and also recognize them: Heidi Bernhardt, Russ LeBlanc, Charlene Britto, Jim Parsons, Sheila Kornhauser and Pierre Seguin. Welcome to Queen's Park, and thank you for what you do every day for the ADHD community.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome our visitors.

I thank all members for their statements.

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Mrs. Gila Martow: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Liberal government has indicated they plan on introducing a new carbon tax in 2015; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers have already been burdened with a health tax of \$300 to \$900 per person that doesn't necessarily go into health care, a \$2-billion smart meter program that failed to conserve energy, and households are paying almost \$700 more annually for unaffordable subsidies under the Green Energy Act; and

"Whereas a carbon tax scheme would increase the cost of everyday goods including gasoline and home heating; and

"Whereas the government continues to run unaffordable deficits without a plan to reduce spending while collecting \$30 billion more annually in tax revenues than 11 years ago; and

"Whereas the aforementioned points lead to the conclusion that the government is seeking justification to raise taxes to pay for their excessive spending, without accomplishing any concrete targets;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To abandon the idea of introducing yet another unaffordable and ineffective tax on Ontario families and businesses."

I am pleased to sign my name and give it to page Sameer.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I have a petition called “Privatizing Hydro One: Another wrong choice.”

“Whereas once you privatize hydro, there’s no return; and

“We’ll lose billions in reliable annual revenues for schools and hospitals; and

“We’ll lose our biggest economic asset and control over our energy future; and

“We’ll pay higher and higher hydro bills just like what’s happened elsewhere;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To stop the sale of Hydro One and make sure Ontario families benefit from owning Hydro One now and for generations to come.”

I fully support the petition and will send it to the table with page Matthew.

LUNG HEALTH

Mr. Han Dong: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children. Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

“In the Ontario Lung Association report, *Your Lungs, Your Life*, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

1320

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To allow for deputations on MPP Kathryn McGarry’s private member’s bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario Lung Health Action Plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

“Once debated at committee, to expedite Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, through the committee stage and back to the Legislature for third and final reading; and to immediately call for a vote on Bill 41 and to seek royal assent immediately upon its passage.”

I support this petition and I will put my name to it.

DENTAL CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that has to do with dental care, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas thousands of Ontarians live with pain and infection because they cannot afford dental care;

“Whereas the promised \$45-million dental fund under the Poverty Reduction Strategy excluded impoverished adults;

“Whereas the program was designed with rigid criteria so that most of the people in need do not qualify; and

“Whereas desperately needed dental care money went unspent and was diverted to other areas even though people are still suffering without access to dental care;”

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To do all in its power to stop the dental fund from being diverted to support other programs; and

“To fully utilize the commissioned funding to provide dental care to those in need.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it, and Siena will bring it to the Clerks.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas there are critical transportation infrastructure needs for the province;

“Whereas giving people multiple avenues for their transportation needs takes cars off the road;

“Whereas public transit increases the quality of life for Ontarians and helps the environment;

“Whereas the constituents of Orléans and east Ottawa are in need of greater transportation infrastructure;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Support the Moving Ontario Forward plan and the Ottawa LRT phase II construction, which will help address the critical transportation infrastructure needs of Orléans, east Ottawa and” our wonderful “province of Ontario.”

It gives me great pleasure to affix my signature and give it to page Jacob.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the rightful purpose of Ontario’s Environmental Protection Act (EPA) is to ‘provide for the protection and conservation of the natural environment.’...; and

“Whereas ‘all landfills will eventually release leachate to the surrounding environment and therefore all landfills will have some impact on the water quality of the local ecosystem.’—Threats to Sources of Drinking Water and Aquatic Health in Canada;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as below:

“That section 27 of the EPA should be reviewed and amended immediately to prohibit the establishment of new or expanded landfills at fractured bedrock sites and

other hydrogeologically unsuitable locations within the province of Ontario.”

I affix my signature and I thank you very much for the opportunity I have to present this petition to you, Mr. Speaker.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that was collected by Rose Smith from my riding in Val Caron, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas the Ontario government has made ... PET scanning a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients under certain conditions...;

“Whereas, since ... 2009, insured PET scans are performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

“Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with Health Sciences North, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through Health Sciences North, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Grace to bring it to the Clerk.

STUDENT SAFETY

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas there are no mandatory requirements for teachers and school volunteers to have completed CPR training in Ontario;

“Whereas the primary responsibility for the care and safety of students rests with each school board and its employees;

“Whereas the safety of children in elementary schools in Ontario should be paramount;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To work in conjunction with all Ontario school boards to ensure that adequate CPR training is available to school employees and volunteers.”

Speaker, I agree with the petition, affix my signature and give it to page Jaleelah to bring down.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that was collected by Mr. Mike Brady, from my riding, in Garson. It reads as follows:

“Whereas quality care for the 77,000 residents of long-term-care (LTC) homes is a priority for many Ontario families;

“Whereas over the last 10 years 50% of Ontario’s hospital-based complex continuing care beds have been

closed by the ... government” and there has been an almost 30% “increase in the acuity of LTC residents...;

“Whereas the provincial government does not provide adequate funding to ensure care and staffing levels in long-term-care homes...;

“Whereas there is extensive evidence that a care standard can result in increased staff levels, which translates into improved quality of care for patients...;

“We ... petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario...”

To amend the “Long-Term Care Homes Act (2007) for a legislated care standard of a minimum four hours per resident each day, adjusted for acuity level and case mix....”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Eastyn to bring it to the Clerk.

LUNG HEALTH

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children. Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

“In the Ontario Lung Association report, Your Lungs, Your Life, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To allow for deputations on MPP Kathryn McGarry’s private member’s bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario Lung Health Action Plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

“Once debated at committee, to expedite Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, through the committee stage and back to the Legislature for third and final reading; and to immediately call for a vote on Bill 41 and to seek royal assent immediately upon its passage.”

I support this petition, affix my signature to it and hand it to page Anna.

PERSONAL SUPPORT WORKERS

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas personal support workers are the largest group of unregulated health care workers in Canada; and

“Whereas PSWs take care of society’s most vulnerable citizens including seniors in long-term care, home

care, hospitals and retirement homes, and adults with disabilities in supportive housing; and

"Whereas there is an increasing demand for PSWs and they are a key component of a sustainable health care system; and

"Whereas PSWs do not have a set scope of practice, standards of practice or curriculum; and

"Whereas PSWs are left to perform one of the most important jobs in health care without the proper tools;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To designate personal support workers as a regulated health profession and enact according legislation."

I agree with this and will be passing it off to page Siena.

1330

HOSPITAL FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that was collected by Mr. Gary Gray in my riding, from Capreol. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Health Sciences North is facing major budget shortfalls leading to a decrease of 87,000 hours of nursing care in psychiatry, day surgery, the surgical unit, obstetrics, mental health services, oncology, critical care" and emergency...;

"Whereas Ontario's provincial government has cut hospital funding in real dollar terms for the last eight years in a row; and

"Whereas these cuts will" lead to "higher medical accident rates as nursing and direct patient care hours are reduced all across the hospital;"

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to: "Stop the proposed cuts to Health Sciences North and protect beds and services.

"Increase overall hospital funding in Ontario with a plan to increase funding at least to the average of other provinces."

I support this petition, will affix my name and ask my good page Grace to bring it to the Clerk.

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have another petition here that's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas it is absolutely crucial that more is done to provide Ontarians retirement financial security which they can rely on;

"Whereas the federal government has refused to partner with our government to ensure that Ontarians have a secure retirement plan;

"Whereas more than three million Ontarians rely on the Canada Pension Plan alone, that currently does not provide enough to support an adequate standard of living;

"Whereas the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan will provide the safe and stable retirement that Ontarians need;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all members of the Ontario assembly support a plan to move forward with an Ontario-made pension retirement plan that will provide a financially secure retirement for Ontarians."

I agree with the petition, sign my name and hand it to page Gabriel to bring down.

POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"The purpose of this petition is to institute a law allowing citizens with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) to have access to a service dog. A service dog greatly reduces the social anxieties PTSD victims suffer. This will allow every citizen the ability to enjoy the quality of life our government works hard to ensure its people have."

I agree with this and will be passing it off to page Laura.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time for petitions has expired.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AMENDMENT ACT (REHABILITATIVE OR THERAPEUTIC PURPOSES EXEMPTION), 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA LOCATION À USAGE D'HABITATION (EXCLUSION POUR SERVICES DE RÉADAPTATION OU SERVICES THÉRAPEUTIQUES)

Ms. Hoggarth moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 121, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 with respect to the exemption for living accommodation occupied for the purpose of receiving rehabilitative or therapeutic services / Projet de loi 121, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation à l'égard de l'exclusion applicable aux logements occupés pour y recevoir des services de réadaptation ou des services thérapeutiques.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation. I recognize the member for Barrie.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Thank you, Speaker. I rise in the House today to open debate on Bill 121, which aims to improve the lives of those living on the margins of our society, on the brink between a traumatic past and a hopeful new life.

I'm going to begin with a story. Of course, the name of the person has been changed for privacy reasons.

Jennifer had her first child at 17 and cut her education short because she could not afford daycare and her family had disowned her. Her situation got steadily worse as her boyfriend became physically and emotionally abusive. Pregnant with her second child, Jennifer escaped the abuse when she was connected with the Samaritan House transition housing program.

The transition housing program allowed Samaritan House to offer Jennifer and her child one year of safety and support in a fully furnished three-bedroom apartment as they helped her rebuild her life—one year to rebuild her life, and the clock was ticking. But physical and emotional abuse had taken their toll. Jennifer used to shake at the mention of her abuser's name. She was terrified that he would find her, and it took over three months before she even felt secure enough to leave the apartment, let alone plan for the future. But with support, she started to look to her future and the future of her children.

Samaritan House helped her register to complete high school, and Jennifer completed two credits, but her second baby arrived before she could complete the final two that she needed. By this point, Jennifer had been there a year and, under the current rules, her time was up. Jennifer needed to be ready to become fully independent, but she wasn't ready.

She worked so hard while in the program, learning to identify abuse, how not to fall back into an abusive situation and how to survive on her own. She worked diligently finishing her two credits, often late at night when her children were in bed. But one year just wasn't enough time to fully recover and get on the path to better employment, so she got stuck working minimum wage jobs and depending on Ontario Works for financial security.

Jennifer had dreams of going on to college or university and wanted to work in social services. She wanted to give back and to help others in her same situation. But without a high school diploma, her options are limited, and she no longer believes that she will ever make it to post-secondary education.

Imagine what six more months or one more year of support could have done for Jennifer and her two kids, and then consider how many people confront the same impossible reality each year.

My bill would amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006, so that housing transition programs can truly support women like Jennifer and all those whose circumstances in life have put them on the brink. As I noted in the introduction of the bill, the current subclause 5(k)(ii) provides that the act does not apply to certain living accommodations occupied for the purpose of receiving rehabilitative or therapeutic services if the accommodation is intended to be provided for no more than a one-year period. This bill amends this time period by extending it to three years for people living in temporary transitional housing.

Transitional housing is an intermediate step between emergency crisis shelter and permanent housing. It is meant to provide a safe, supportive environment where residents can overcome trauma, begin to address the issues that led to their homelessness or kept them homeless, and begin to rebuild their support network and their lives. These programs are offered by organizations such as Covenant House Toronto, Samaritan House in Barrie, SouthWesthealthline, Transitional House and transitional housing at Serenity House in Ottawa, just to name a few. They tell us that, sadly, Jennifer's experience is not unique. There are lots of people who aren't ready to leave transitional housing programs after just one year.

Our friends at Covenant House in Toronto and Samaritan House, which is in my riding of Barrie, are particularly interested in seeing this legislation passed. Covenant House deals primarily with youth homelessness. They operate a 28-bed transitional housing program on-site that they call Rights of Passage. Typically, about 60% of the youth graduate from this program, and average stays run roughly 200 days per youth. They are currently seeing a trend of younger youth in the program as well as more youth with mental health issues. Over the years, they have had many cases where a youth would have benefited enormously from staying in the program beyond the one year allowed through the Residential Tenancies Act. This could be for several reasons, including some of the following:

- the youth are not ready because they've not learned the skills they need to move to independent living;

- housing affordability or wait-lists mean that there is no other housing available at the time their one-year term under the Residential Tenancies Act ends;

- the youth may suffer from attachment disorders, addiction, mental health, trauma or other issues that require more time before a sustainable, independent life is even possible;

- they might be in school and cannot afford to move to independent living; or

- there are times when they are ready to move out but have a sudden emergency that makes independent living impossible or unsustainable, such as sudden unemployment or a relapse into the issues that brought them there in the first place.

1340

If we continue to allow people to leave these programs with no hope, it means we are failing them and we are failing ourselves. Over and over again, when people are forced out before they are ready, they fall back into poverty or addiction, or return to an abusive spouse. As policy-makers, we need to say that this is not right. We understand that people learn at different paces and that people understand in different ways. People heal in different ways and at different rates. We cannot say that one year is enough for everyone.

Samaritan House transitional housing provides safe housing for women and children recovering from domestic abuse or violence. It provides programming that

helps women break the cycle of violence, as well as life skills, education and job search training. The staff at these programs are incredible, and they provide as much education and empowerment as they can, over the length of the program. But as with Jennifer, it often takes a good three months for these survivors to feel safe and secure. So it takes quite a while before they can give 100% to the programs. Even then, they often have self-esteem issues: fear of simple things like making a phone call to take care of an issue, or going for job interviews. As well, the end portion of someone's stay at Samaritan House, although still working on the programs, is also heavily focused on assisting them to become stable once they leave.

In my riding of Barrie, there is a housing shortage. Believe it or not, Vancouver, Toronto and then Barrie have the highest rental costs in Canada. We need to understand what this means for vulnerable people in transition. It means that they can work as hard as possible at the program and make incredible progress, but if they don't have enough time to secure their finances before heading off on their own, we're dooming them. The difficulty of finding permanent, affordable housing once they leave is a huge issue. The worst part is that it is the lack of stability that makes the children victims of these situations too, endangering their chances for a stable future.

That is what makes transitional housing so great. It provides time with reduced rents and supports so that the people in the programs who haven't completed high school can get their last credits and get their high school diploma. After the initial settling in to living in transitional housing and the beginning of working through the offered programs, it takes time to convince them that this is something that can be accomplished while living in this housing program. Their self-esteem is lacking; they have no confidence in their abilities. By the time they decide to do this, apply to do it and then work through the courses, the year is over.

From a financial perspective, this bill would save a lot of money as well. The average monthly cost to help someone who is homeless starts with a shelter bed. It costs \$1,932 per month for someone to stay in a shelter bed. It costs \$4,333 per month for someone to stay in a provincial jail, and it costs \$10,900 per month for someone in a hospital bed, versus \$199.92 per month for social housing or \$701 per month for rent supplements.

It makes social and economic sense to pass this bill. It's good for everyone.

I want to conclude with the story of someone who did get to extend his stay in transitional housing. Let's call him Mike. At 22, Mike was at Covenant House and managed to find work in building maintenance, but it was precarious. He could not support himself after his year in the community apartment program was up, but thankfully his stay was extended. In the second year, Mike entered a trades training program and continued to work. In the second year, Mike found his path to a brighter future.

All in all, this bill would help people in my riding as well as many ridings across the province. The amazing

organizations that run these programs would be able to provide individualized support to those people who need a little more time to become high school graduates, post-secondary students, employees and full members of our society. That is the right thing to do. It's the smart thing to do.

I urge you to support this bill, and I look forward to hearing from everyone who is going to speak about it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to commend the MPP for Barrie for bringing forward this bill to try to help people who rely on transitional housing for those receiving rehabilitative and therapeutic services. We understand the importance of this housing to help people who are transitioning from homelessness, addiction and other challenges. The Canadian Mental Health Association states, "Research indicates that a stable and supported living environment is essential to maintaining the health and well-being of people with serious mental illness and is integral to their recovery."

I understand that the member's goal is to ensure that people who need these housing programs for more than a year aren't pushed out, but we need to remember that the Residential Tenancies Act is there to protect tenants. We need to be cautious that expanded exemptions might reduce the protection to the very vulnerable people we're trying to protect. The programs that the member is talking about are not the ones that are regulated by that time frame in the tenancies act. It means that the tenancies act does not apply to those establishments. Putting them in those establishments, all kinds of other restrictions fall upon them. What we're really looking for, in my opinion, and what the member is putting forward, is to provide an extension of the actual services provided in these places rather than whether it is or is not covered by the tenancies act.

If it is happening that some of them are getting pushed out, I think we all need to do more to make sure that that doesn't happen, that they have to get pushed out before they're ready. Halton has put together a report on best practices for transitional housing called *More Than a Roof*. This report was funded through a grant from the federal government, and it found that "transitional housing programs are more effective if there are available options in the community for permanent (affordable) housing, as well as ongoing supports through community services."

Quite frankly, this government is failing on affordable housing. The Halton report did a great job of outlining the spectrum of housing from homelessness to transitional housing to affordable housing, all the way to homeownership. This bill addresses one small aspect of transitional housing. Again, I want to commend the member for her efforts, but I hope that the government will take this and build on it to address the many housing problems we have in Ontario. Over a year ago, the government declared their goal to end homelessness, but since then, we have seen very little progress made. In fact, our housing problems are getting worse.

Last year, the Canadian Network of Women's Shelters and Transition Houses released a survey of shelters across Canada. They found that one of the things that would make things better was, "Access to safe, affordable and permanent housing options. We find that this is one of the main reasons that women end up going back to the abusive relationships time and time again."

Every year, our affordable housing wait-list seems to reach a new record high. There are currently 168,000 families waiting for affordable housing in Ontario, and the wait-lists are measured in years. If this continues, we will soon be measuring them in decades, Mr. Speaker.

On the far end of the spectrum, the cost of buying a house or a condo in Ontario continues to increase. This government continues to implement more policies such as allowing higher development charges and increasing hydro rates, which force up the cost of housing. Pricing is out of reach for more and more Ontarians, resulting in more and more people needing affordable housing. Across the entire spectrum, we need to do better, and there are things that we can do. We can look at models like Housing First, the successful model used in Medicine Hat; we can look at the city of Vancouver's plans to encourage the building of more rental housing; and we can allow housing service providers to spend their money more effectively by no longer forcing them to purchase natural gas and insurance through the Housing Services Corp.

This organization was created to save social housing providers money by negotiating bulk purchasing discounts. They were supposed to pass those savings on to the housing providers, but that isn't happening. Toronto Community Housing has boarded up a number of their units because they simply can't afford to fix them, but the TCHC's own numbers show that if they had been allowed to purchase natural gas with the city of Toronto instead of the HSC, they would have saved \$6.3 million in one year. Think of how much housing that could have provided, Mr. Speaker. Think of the difference that that \$6.3 million could have made to the families waiting for affordable housing.

And it's not just Toronto. A report from Hamilton shows that they would have saved over \$1 million if they hadn't been forced by the provincial government to purchase gas through the HSC. Just this summer, a city of Stratford report found that they would have saved \$41,000 by not purchasing gas through the HSC.

1350

As I mentioned earlier, the challenge that transitional housing providers face is that there aren't enough affordable housing options available. The system isn't working. The money going to the HSC is just part of the problem, but one that this government can easily fix and it will have a real impact.

One of the things that is disturbing is where the money is going. While 168,000 families are waiting for affordable housing, executives at the Housing Services Corp. are jetting off to Europe, California and Australia. There are even unexplained expenses from Palm Beach and

Rome. While these families are struggling to put food on the table, executives at the HSC are expensing alcohol, dinners at Canoe and fancy restaurants, and \$8 water. While these families are on a waiting list that lasts for years, executives at the HSC are putting money into questionable business ventures, including over \$1 million to a solar panel company and a company in Manchester, England, that never even existed except on paper. The people of Ontario deserve better.

Again, I want to commend the member from Barrie for her interest in helping people who need transitional housing. Let's take one more step and really solve the problem of affordable housing in Ontario.

Thank you very much for your efforts. We look forward to working with you to solve the problem.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I listened with amazement to the member from Oxford. I mean, Conservatives speaking in favour of affordable housing? The moon is rising as we speak. Was this not the party—I'm sorry; how long has Prime Minister Harper been in office where we have not had a national housing policy? Just saying, just saying. Hey, I'm a United Church minister. I believe in the road to Damascus and conversion moments, so let's acknowledge this is one of them.

I want to commend the member from Barrie. Absolutely, we, as New Democrats, will support this motion. Of course, what would we like to see? We would like to see this motion not be necessary because we would like to see affordable housing in the province of Ontario. We would like to see those—my figure is a little bit different from the member from Oxford's—170,000-plus families in Ontario waiting for affordable housing to be able to get affordable housing. We would like to see youth, in particular, those who are served by places like Covenant House—let's give a shout-out to them. They do phenomenal work and I've been cognizant of them, both as a clergyperson and also as an MPP, for decades now. They do amazing work.

Of course, she's right, absolutely right: We should not be turfing children and women out on the streets from the only housing they know. That's the reality. Would that housing be permanent? Yes, it should be permanent, absolutely. I hearken to, hey, a bill that this House passed: inclusionary zoning. I know that the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore tabled a bill on inclusionary zoning, as have I for many, many years now. We need a system whereby municipalities can dictate that developers of over, say, 50 units actually set aside some of those units for affordable housing. Then we wouldn't have this crisis that pre-empts this bill.

So, yes, we need affordable housing. We need new builds. We need inclusionary zoning. And, by the way, we need real rent control. Let me tell you that in South Parkdale, where a one-bedroom goes for over \$1,500 a month, vacancy de-control is not working. Property managers and the owners of the buildings can muscle out people, especially people without the knowledge to fight

them at the tribunal—muscle them out of their apartments and then double the rent. That's not okay. That's not rent control. We need real rent control.

We in the New Democratic Party have put forward that policy for years, many, many times—decades now. Yet somehow this Liberal government sees fit to side with the owners and the developers and not with the people who rent and who need housing—sad.

Getting back to the member's bill: I just want to tell a story, because I was one of those kids. I actually left home at 15, a long, long time ago. It was not a safe home that I came from. For many of our homeless youth, that's the reality. For many of our homeless youth, the streets are safer than home. I'm going to repeat that: The streets are safer than home. We don't understand homelessness, especially homeless youth, unless we understand that salient detail: that the streets are safer than home.

As you walk out from this place, along College Street, Dundas Street and Queen Street, you will see homeless youth, and you will know that they're not there on a whim. They're not there because this is cool. They're not there because they're stoners. They are there because the streets are safer than home.

When you grow up in a violent home, when you grow up in a home that is unsafe, and you leave home at 15, 16, 17 or 18—back in my day, we had no place to go. We had our friends' couches. We couch-surfed or—I often tell this story, because I think it's a story of hope: Before I was elected here, I slept in Queen's Park. I slept just north of this building for many, many nights in the summer, because it was warm and it was free.

I know what it is to be a homeless youth, I know what it is to leave home and I know how desperate that story can be and how desperate that life can be. Think about it. If any parents here who are listening or who are in the crowd—I know myself, because I have two 30-something children. I think of them. When I was 15 or 16, literally with nothing—you can't work. What are you going to do, Mr. Speaker? You can't work. You can't go home. Where do you go? What do you do?

In my day, there was only the Fred Victor Mission, the one mission. I want to give a shout-out to them, because they have been around in the downtown centre of Toronto for decades, and they have provided such support. But even for children back then, that was no place to stay. You couldn't stay there. That was older men. As a young woman, homeless—a kid—you didn't stay there. You couch-surfed and you slept in the park. That's what we did.

Now we have options. We have options like Covenant House, and those options need to be able to do their job. They need to be able to care for these children where the home life doesn't. Again, when the streets are safer than home, where do these children go?

So yes, absolutely, I support this member's bill. We need so much more, though, of course. We need inclusionary zoning. We need new bills. We need money into housing, both federal and provincial, and I have to say, we need a national housing strategy. We need all of the above and we need the member's bill, because we at

least need those providers who have been providing for decades without a whole lot of support to be able to do their job, to be able to look after the children whom we as a community haven't looked after very well in the past. We haven't done it.

For the child that was me way back then, and for the children now, just a note: As you walk past those children and see them and think, "Oh, they are there because of drugs. They are there because of addiction. They are there because of mental health issues"—maybe, but they are also there because the streets are safer than home.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'm pleased to stand and speak to the bill put forward by the member from Barrie. I'd like to begin by applauding the member for her work on this vital issue, and I'm thankful to have the opportunity to say a few words in support of this important bill.

Halton is one of the fastest-growing and most affluent communities in the province, and I can't think of a better place to live, work or raise a family, but we still have too many residents who face significant difficulties in their day-to-day lives—whether it is drugs, alcohol or other addiction-related ailments, there are individuals in our region who are struggling to control their lives, and they sometimes need a helping hand to keep them on the path to recovery.

That's why this bill is so important: It gives Ontarians facing serious challenges the help they need to get back on their feet.

1400

In Halton, ADAPT, or Alcohol, Drug and Gambling Assessment Prevention and Treatment Services, is that helping hand. For years, this dedicated and inspiring group has worked tirelessly to offer youth and adult services to individuals struggling with substance abuse. They offer treatment plans, counselling and referral assessment, as well as community support and education. They do an incredible job building up our community and making sure that our neighbours don't fall through the cracks.

But sometimes the people who rely on ADAPT's support need more time before they can get back on their feet. A one-year restriction on the length of time an individual can stay in this transitional support program is too limiting for the most vulnerable residents. A three-year limit will be a responsible and pragmatic approach, allowing incredible organizations like ADAPT to better serve and help their clients.

This support will help Ontario families, our economy and our province. An extended limit would help cut costs, improve efficiency and help more people turn their lives around, and that really is what it's all about.

It's tragic that anyone in Halton—or our province, for that matter—should have to go through life struggling with substance abuse. That's why I'm proud that our government continues to discuss these important issues.

I believe this bill will greatly improve the lives of our most vulnerable residents. I applaud the member from Barrie.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Jim McDonell: Bill 121, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006—of course, we will be supporting this bill. But with all the health care cuts, I was hoping for more from this Liberal government. It's a very small step from a government that has a questionable record on both social services and health care.

This, of course, is conditional on a person actually getting into housing for which they qualify. And whether or not they qualify for it, there is just a lack of housing. Unfortunately, with this bill, it just means that there will be more people waiting. We have a drastic shortage of affordable housing, and we see that everywhere. I see people in my community of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry who continually qualify for services but can't get them. They're on a waiting list.

Just a couple weeks ago, a lady from the village of Williamstown, where I live, told me that she finally got some respite help for her developmentally delayed daughter, after years of applying to all these wonderful programs advertised by this government. Go to the website and there's no shortage of programs. It's a very familiar process. They're told to apply. If they're lucky, they get on a wait-list, and they stay there until either their children get too old to qualify or the program changes and they have to reapply. It's a continuous story that we hear and a sad story, because these people need help in looking after their children, in many cases, or family members, and they are at their wits' end. There's just no help.

She was thanking me for the help she finally received, after getting some advice from the office. But it wasn't from a government program. It was from a not-for-profit we are sending them to, to get some help, because the fact is, they just don't get any help from the government programs. It was the first time she had received any help, and it's truly a sad state of affairs, but it is typical of health care in this province.

We have a Premier who sits here and complains about the federal government not doing their fair share, but we don't have to look much further than this year's budget, with the old scheme of promising one thing, doing something else and then blaming somebody else. They're so desperate for money that they actually cut \$54 million from the federal government's increase in health care spending to cover non-health care projects like their cancelled gas plans.

The Auditor General warned us just last year that this wasteful spending would start to crowd out services, and we're seeing it in a bill like this today, which really doesn't do anything other than put more people on a waiting list. So almost \$65 billion in extra income that this government's got—doubling the revenue—and all we're seeing is programs being cut and infrastructure not being placed. It's just a sign of waste that's affecting everyday people not getting the services they need.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm very pleased to join the debate. It is quite difficult to follow the comments made by my colleague the member from Parkdale–High Park. She hit every note on this and many more bang-on, and kudos to my colleague.

Also, she expressed the amazement that we all feel in this House in hearing some of the newfound priorities on the PC side. They are the defenders of public health care and social housing and social programming. This is child care. I mean, the environment—what's next? They're veritable socialists, Speaker. It's incredible. We'll sign them up, though. If they want to sign a membership card, we'll sign them up. The only thing that's different—I mean, they're defending public hydro now. The once-ardent propagators of selling it and shutting it down are now the ones who are standing in defence, apparently. So this is funny. It's funny to be a part of that in this House.

But seriously, this is an important bill. I want to commend the member for introducing it, especially given that it isn't one that you see highlighted in the media. You're not catching headlines here, and I certainly applaud you, member from Barrie, for taking this on. My hope is that your party and your caucus support it wholeheartedly and do everything that they can to move this thing along, because it is quite straightforward. We are supporting people here who need that support. We are giving them an extension on what, essentially, is a lifeline to getting themselves back on their feet, establishing their roots in their communities, and transitioning through hard times, which we know everyone is susceptible to. You can never pinpoint when you might be affected—the loss of a job, unexpected illness, tragedies in your immediate family. This is stuff that gets triggered without any warning, and these supports have to be there. They have to be not only timely, but they have to recognize that sometimes it takes more time, and this is what you are doing here with this bill.

Certainly many stakeholders in Ontario are supportive of it and, I think, have worked closely with you to develop the content of this bill. Covenant House and Samaritan House have identified clearly that one year is not long enough for a person to do all the things that it takes to get established in a new life after entering transitional housing. For many, it takes time to become well enough to focus, to find a job, to complete training, to address their health care concerns and learn new behaviours, finish school and get into suitable housing.

My colleague from Parkdale–High Park, again, hit the nail on the head in addressing or highlighting the need for affordable housing. Coming from a riding like Essex, we are a rural riding. We have small hamlets, small communities. They're wonderful. Actually, if you look at our housing costs, they are, compared to the rest of Ontario, relatively low, although there are certainly many, many people in my riding who find it challenging to find affordable housing, even given the circumstances around real estate prices.

This is a problem that successive governments—federal and provincial, Liberal and Conservative—have failed to address in any wholehearted way. It's one that

we can do, we should do and we need to do. It makes sense not only socially but economically.

Inclusionary zoning: The member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, you had a bill that was on the right track. We all knew that and we certainly were supportive of it. We'd like to see that again. We'd like to see some of the content of that bill wrapped into other measures that the government has put forward. I don't know why they're so reluctant, but it's something that is quite clearly needed in our provincial policy here.

Speaker, this is really one of those common-sense bills that we can all get around. I'd love to see it receive quick passage and I commend, again, the member from Barrie for bringing it forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: It's a pleasure to rise in support of this bill from my colleague the member from Barrie. The community of Barrie is indeed very lucky to have such a caring and compassionate representative.

Mr. Speaker, this bill proposes a very simple change, but a very important one. The ability for transitional housing to be allowed for people to utilize for a period of up to three years, as opposed to just one, for many people in these precarious situations will be immensely important. Transitional housing is just that. It's not meant to be a long-term solution, but as the member from Parkdale–High Park so eloquently put it, when the streets are safer than a home, it might take longer than 12 months to secure the housing, the supports, the placement for education, employment—whatever an individual needs to be able to move on to more permanent housing.

1410

Mr. Speaker, in my own community of Etobicoke–Lakeshore, we have a number of transitional housing facilities, some of which have this challenge about what happens after 12 months to some of the people who are living there. One facility in particular, Women's Habitat, has been around since the late 1970s or the early 1980s. It just recently underwent a major renovation and expansion of its facilities. That shelter serves women and families that are escaping domestic violence. In some cases, that 12-month period simply has not been enough. Actually, this shelter has allowed some women and some families to continue to live there beyond the 12 months, simply because the circumstances of their situations mandated that they needed to stay there to be safe.

Mr. Speaker, I also have a facility, Elisa House, run by the St. Vincent de Paul Society, in my riding, also providing transitional housing services for women, particularly women with addiction or mental health issues, or those escaping abuse.

I also have another facility, the Reconnect short-term crisis beds, for people who are in the criminal justice system and perhaps have mental health issues, and they need that transition back into society.

Mr. Speaker, I applaud this bill. It's going to help very many vulnerable people in this province. It's a simple solution that will make a big impact. I trust that all members will support it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm very happy to speak on the member from Barrie's private member's bill, Bill 121, Residential Tenancies Amendment Act. I think that in the House, opinion is not going to differ, and if you just go on the street and you ask random people anywhere, we want to help people. I think we're all here to help people, not just women who are escaping abusive relationships or abusive situations, but children, the elderly, people with disabilities, people who are struggling, and immigrants. We're seeing waves of refugees all over the world. We all want to do more.

What does it come down to? It comes down to resources. The more you help, sometimes one person, perhaps Jennifer, the girl whom the member from Barrie spoke about—perhaps if we allow Jennifer to stay an extra year, maybe there is another Jennifer who is waiting for a spot and then she has to wait longer because there aren't extra resources put in place. It really does come down to the resources.

What does that mean, "resources"? It means that we take in a certain amount of revenue. The government shouldn't operate any differently than a company or a household. We take in revenue. The revenue that we take in isn't from selling a product the way a company does. It isn't from a salary income the way a household is. It's from tax revenue and service charges and things of the like, and perhaps even selling off important government assets like Hydro One. That's where our revenue comes in. What happens with that revenue? That is for us to decide, all three parties.

I think we all agree that a lot more resources should be put into things like helping people escape and get back on their feet, especially those with children. It means focusing, making our priorities, not wasting money, Mr. Speaker. Maybe it means having those adult discussions about what our priorities are as a society here in Ontario.

Do we want to host the best Pan Am Games in the world, or maybe we just want to host decent Pan Am Games, respectable Pan Am Games, fun Pan Am Games? We're all seeing the Blue Jays. It's a lot of fun to see the Blue Jays winning. Guess what? It's not costing the taxpayers any money at all, and they're winning. I think the province is getting a lot of spirit out of it, as they did from the Pan Am Games.

But it all comes down to where we spend that money.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: It gives me pleasure to rise today on behalf of my constituents in Cambridge and North Dumfries township. So good afternoon to all, including Bev at home, who I know is watching on the television set this afternoon.

I'm here really to commend and support the member from Barrie's private members' bill, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006. One of the reasons I commend her for her work this afternoon, and why I was very excited to come and speak to the bill, has been my former work as care coordinator for CCAC, the com-

munity care access centre. I spent many years in that organization as a care coordinator for hospital—when we would often get individuals in that were homeless. They ended up in the emergency department night after night with no housing to go to. When we finally got their housing needs addressed with transitional support programs and transitional housing, we noted that their visits to the emergency department did slow down. That was a cost savings for us, but it was also better for them. As a care coordinator, I then went to the community, and I ended up with the hardest-to-serve population: the chronic complex adult population.

I wanted to tell you a little about Joe. Joe experienced chronic homelessness. When I met him, he had been in and out of hospital for the previous few weeks. He finally had a bed at the Cambridge Shelter Corp.'s The Bridges, which is one of our transitional housing programs within a bricks-and-mortar housing complex.

Joe suffered from a number of different issues. He was in his mid-fifties. It's not his real name. He suffered from alcoholism and diabetes, and because he was homeless he didn't look after it. He was a double-below-knee amputee, so he was in a wheelchair. He was a chronic smoker; he had issues with emphysema and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. In essence, he was a gentleman who also often had angry outbursts and was not always able to comply with the client code of conduct which is often posted in homeless shelters and in men's shelters, so he had been banned from a few of those things.

Very, very fortunately, he had a transitional apartment that was brought forward from the Cambridge Shelter Corp. It was a small one-bedroom apartment that he was in for a period of one year. Once he got into that housing program, then he got an awful lot of wraparound services to help start addressing some of these issues. But as the member from Barrie has pointed out, one year was not enough for this gentleman. Out he went at the end the year, and, within the first week, he was back in the emergency department, and the same cycle happened again. Fortunately, he was able to get into another transitional support service program in the same residence and he was able to then move into an apartment, where he stayed for a number of years to help address his complex needs.

What Joe points out is some of the barriers and some of the issues and why they become a hard-to-serve population. The barriers are many, but I wanted to list a few of these from my own experience as a nurse with this population: mental health and addiction issues; inability to take medication at a certain time and manage their medications; alcoholism; lack of literacy; chronic pain; post-traumatic pain syndrome; refugees and new Canadians with a language barrier who had a number of chronic health issues needed these services; and as I said, inability to comply with a client code of conduct, so they may be kicked out of some of the men's shelters.

In Joe's instance, with the transitional support program, he was able to move out of that, and it took longer than a year. Some of his wraparound services included, from Cambridge, a variety of services: literacy skills, life skills, a trustee program, individual family case plan—

these are all services that are provided from the Cambridge Shelter Corp.—housing help, job-search help, linkages to other community resources such as Cambridge Active Self Help, the Self-Help Food Bank, the John Howard Society, employment options, job skills, and early years. The list goes on.

1420

What I wanted to point out was that the issues that bring an individual to the point where he needs that support system around him means that those are the individual reasons why one year in a transitional program is not going to be adequate. They need to address so many things, develop trust with their workers and have some fairly intensive case management to be able to bring that person to the point where they can transition out of that program and into a life that they're able to create for themselves.

I put my full support behind this bill. I do believe that three years is a much more reasonable program. It saves us money in the long run, and I really appreciate the chance to speak today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? Further debate?

I now return to the member from Barrie. You have two minutes for a reply.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Thank you, Speaker. This bill is important to me because very easily I could have been Jennifer. I was married at 19 and had a child when I was 19. I was fortunate enough, however, to be married and also I was fortunate enough to have family, both my husband and I, who supported us. Very clearly, circumstances could have been different. Things have turned out very well, but I very easily could have been Jennifer, and that's why it's important to me.

Also, I'd like to thank the members from Oxford, Parkdale–High Park, Halton, Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, Essex, Etobicoke–Lakeshore, Thornhill and Cambridge for speaking on behalf of this bill. I hope you will support it. I have to say that, yes, we do know that more affordable housing is needed. It has become an issue everywhere in North America, I believe. Our government is working towards reducing waiting lists by building this province up. We hope less people will need subsidized housing.

However, I do not agree that there is an easy solution, as one speaker said. I do agree that we can work together to help alleviate this problem. Thank you for your support.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will take the vote on this item at the end of private members' public business.

CAPPING TOP PUBLIC SECTOR SALARIES ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LE PLAFONNEMENT DES HAUTS TRAITEMENTS DU SECTEUR PUBLIC

Mr. Bisson moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 124, An Act to cap the top public sector salaries / *Projet de loi 124, Loi plafonnant les hauts traitements du secteur public.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation. The member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, this is not the first time that I've brought this bill to the House; it's the second time. We're bringing it back for a very simple reason: that we still have the same problem.

The government says, "Oh, but you know, we brought in our bill and we moved to cap public sector salaries." But that phenomenon of public CEO salaries being extremely high and way out of whack with the rest of the salaries that they should be is still prevalent across the civil service and agencies across this province.

I was raising at question period today what happened with Hydro One. Hydro One has a CEO. That CEO was getting paid \$750,000 a year, which is quite a bit more than what our Premier is getting. She's getting \$240,000 a year. Last time I checked, she's responsible for a budget of about \$130 billion, and the CEO of Hydro One—a good man who works hard and does what he can—is responsible for an organization that's far smaller when it comes to the amount of money that it's responsible for.

Here's what has happened: The government has said, "We want to privatize 60% of Hydro." So what they did is they took away the oversight from our ability of the officers of the House to look at what's going on within this new, privatized hydro system. But thank God, we were still able to FOI through the prospectus they had at the Toronto Stock Exchange. We find out how much they are going to be paying this new CEO: four million bucks. They go from \$750,000 to \$4 million to run the same organization, and the government says, "Oh, but it's the private sector. We've got to do that to be able to attract somebody to do it." Come on. We had a person who was doing it for \$750,000—which was well paid, thank you very much—and now we're going to have somebody who is going to come over and run this corporation for four million bucks?

This is under the legislation that the minister got up about today and defended herself by saying, "If only the NDP had supported our bill, we would have been able to work on this so much faster." You would have had more people getting paid more money quicker. Thank God we held it up somewhat.

But here's the thing: In the end, it's the public's dime. The public says, "Listen, we don't have a problem with people being paid fairly." People understand that if you have somebody who works at a job and there are some skills involved, those skills are worth some dollars and you've got to pay those dollars. I don't think the public has any problem with that. I don't think anybody in this House has a problem with that. But to pay our CEOs the amount of money we're paying them now in our public institutions is way out of whack with what is happening

in other provinces across Canada. If you look at the CEO salaries compared to other provinces in Canada, a lot of CEOs in our organizations are being paid quite well.

Now, the latest round we saw is what happened with the report by the auditor of the province, who came back and said, "Hey, you know what? We privatized the CCACs. Aside from the fact that it's costing us more money"—

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Privatized the CCACs?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We privatized the CCAC system.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We did not privatize the CCACs.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, we did, under Mike Harris. You weren't here. We used to have all not-for-profits that ran the services of CCACs, and the CCACs were allowed, under the Mike Harris government, to privatize those services that used to be delivered under the—you should know that as a former Minister of Health.

But my point is, now that we've moved to this system and have been there for some 15-odd years, it costs us more money to run the CCACs. But here's the one that really gets you going: The salaries of CCAC CEOs over the last four years have gone up by 24%. Now, who do you know out there who is working at any job in this province and got a 24% increase over the last four years?

I look at the workers in your riding, my riding, in Hamilton and across this province. Let's look at the private sector. You're lucky if you get 2% per year in the private sector. You'd be lucky to get 2% on a settlement when it comes to bargaining in the private sector.

In the public sector, a lot of people have been frozen at 0%. Teachers just went in and negotiated. They had to scratch and claw with the government in order to get 1.5% over, what, two years? So how do you get off, as the CEO of a public organization such as those CCACs, turning around and getting a 24% increase when you're giving your workers zero or giving them 1% or 1.5% a year? It should be that you lead by example. If you, as the head of an organization, ask your workers to be more frugal in their demands when it comes to wages, because that's what they've been doing, well, what's good for the goose is good for the gander. They should, quite frankly, be doing the same themselves.

But it doesn't end there, Mr. Speaker. The Pan Am Games: It turns out that Pachi and his friends were doing quite well. I've got to say that it was pretty galling. We paid these people good money—all right, fair enough. They got paid a good buck in order to run the Pan Am Games, and we obviously want good people doing that; it's a world-class event, and we need to make sure that we have good people organizing those games. I don't begrudge people getting paid a fair wage to be able to do that and to be able to try to pull off running an effective Pan Am Games.

But we gave these people bonuses, just for having done their jobs, that doubled their salaries. So if you were getting 400,000 bucks, you got a bonus of 400,000 bucks just for having done your job, because you stayed until the end. My God.

1430

But here's the thing: How fair is that? How many people do I know who work for Xstrata, Placer Dome or Tembec, who even run those organizations—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): If some of you would just pay attention when the Speaker is standing, you might know what's going on in the House. There's only one person debating, but I hear two or maybe three debating each other. If we could just continue that other debate, I'd like to return to the bill.

The member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, I quite appreciate the heckling that's going on in the House, so please don't interfere if you don't have to. I like it when members in this House engage and heckle me when it comes to what I have to say, because you're able to—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I don't think it's appropriate to challenge the Chair in his decision. You might have a wish, but I have a job.

Carry on.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, I only wish you didn't have that job, in the sense of holding them to account when it comes to my ability to have people heckle me. It's okay. I'm just saying I don't mind the heckling, Speaker. You have to do your job, and I understand that. It's a little bit of levity there.

But the point is this: People across this province work hard. They go to work every day. They don't get paid a lot of money, and then they see somebody who is making \$4 million a year to run a public institution. They see the head of a CCAC get 27%, I think it was, on average in increases over the last four years. They see people getting performance bonuses just for doing their jobs. As I was saying before I was so rudely heckled from across the way, how many people get a performance bonus in their jobs just for showing up?

I know all kinds of people who run corporations in this province and in my riding. They don't get performance bonuses of double their salary for showing up in the morning and keeping the plant going. For doing a good job, they get to keep their job and they get to keep the jobs of all the people who are working there.

What's good for the goose is good for the gander, so we've put forward this bill as a party, under my name. It's a very simple bill that would essentially say that you're going to cap the salaries of CEOs at twice—twice, I want to make clear; I said “two and a half times” in the question today, but actually it's two times—the salary of what the Premier gets.

The logic is pretty simple. If you look at the comparators across the country, it's more in line with what's happening in other provinces. But more importantly, it's what's fair. If I'm running an organization in this province that is far smaller than the province of Ontario as far as what the government delivers—the Premier has a budget of \$130-billion-plus, and she's getting paid \$240,000 a year. It's not a heck of a lot of money in the grand scheme of things. But I think at one point you have

to have a bit of a reference, a bit of a reality check on what you pay other CEOs who run organizations in the public sector that are a lot smaller than what she's responsible for.

I'm just saying, as the bill is put forward for New Democrats, that we pegged the salary of those people at two times the salary of the Premier. I think that's ultimately fair, and I think it allows us to go out and recruit the people who we need to be able to run our institutions, and to do so in a way that is responsible to the taxpayers.

C'est important qu'on garde la confiance du public quand ça vient à l'habilité de s'assurer que ce qu'on paie nos fonctionnaires dans le—pas les fonctionnaires, mais ceux en charge de la fonction publique, qu'ils ont l'habilité d'être payés ce qu'ils sont dus; pas de question. Il n'y a personne qui va dire : « Le monde qui gère nos centres de santé communautaire, nos écoles, nos conseils scolaires et autres, ils n'ont pas le droit à un bon salaire. » C'est pareil comme n'importe qui d'autre.

Mais quand on paie quelqu'un quatre millions de dollars pour gérer une organisation telle que Hydro One, quand on paie le chef d'une université, comme on avait à Western, un million de dollars—lui, il a eu une augmentation de 500 000 \$ à un million de dollars, et il l'a fait lui-même avec les processus du CA de cette université. Ça ne se tient pas debout. On a besoin de s'assurer, pour le monde qui paie leurs taxes dans cette province et qui donne l'argent à la province, qu'on respecte ce droit qu'on a été donné de gérer le système pour eux autres et de s'assurer que l'argent que ceux-là sont payés est raisonnable.

Donc, nous autres on pense que si la première ministre de la province est payée environ 240 000 piastres par année, ça fait quasiment beaucoup de bon sens que les salaires pour ces dirigeants-là du secteur public ne soient pas plus de deux fois le salaire de la première ministre. Pourquoi? Parce que c'est raisonnable. Deuxièmement, c'est pour respecter le public à la fin de la journée.

This is all about respecting the public. People at the end pay their taxes, they work hard, and they want to know that when we go get the money from them through the various taxes they pay the province of Ontario, we're going to respect them when it comes to how we spend those dollars. Giving somebody \$1 million to run a university, giving somebody \$4 million to run Hydro One or other examples that are out there is unreasonable when it comes to what people are expecting.

Yes, we need to pay people a reasonable rate, the same way that we pay a teacher, a doctor, a municipal worker or whoever a fair wage. Nobody argues against that. But we need to make sure that the wages we pay the CEOs who run our public institutions are being paid at a reasonable rate, and we think it's very reasonable to say that that be capped at two times the salary of the Premier.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I will be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Etobicoke Centre.

I want to start with agreeing with the member from Timmins–James Bay and the NDP caucus. We share the frustration around compensation for executives in the public sector, and we absolutely believe that Ontarians need a clear rationale as to why people are paid what they're paid. We think that every dollar counts, that everybody needs to do their part, and we are as outraged as anyone at some of the examples we have seen where there isn't a clear rationale.

We agree this issue is one that needs to be addressed. We support the desire of the opposition to take a strong stand. However, we have already done it. We've already taken a strong stand when it comes to executive compensation. The member from Timmins–James Bay is right: We need to take a good, hard look at compensation. He's just two years late to the party, Speaker.

You see, we have already passed, without your support—I just want to remind you what's in Bill 8. Let's look at Bill 8 that's already passed. We're implementing Bill 8 now.

It expands the Ontario Ombudsman's role to include municipalities, school boards and publicly funded universities. The NDP voted against that.

It requires cabinet ministers, parliamentary assistants, opposition leaders and their respective staff to post expenses online, making Ontario a leader in expense reporting. The NDP voted against that.

Bill 8 requires the Speaker to post online MPP expense information for out-of-riding travel, hotel accommodations related to that travel, meals and hospitality. NDP, where were you? You voted against it.

The patient ombudsman—you voted against the patient ombudsman. You voted against expanding the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth's mandate. Bill 8 gives the government greater oversight over air ambulance providers. You voted against that.

I could go on and on about what Bill 8 does, but among those other things—

Mr. Paul Miller: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. Point of order, the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: The minister is really drifting from what we're supposed to be dealing with.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): That's not a point of order.

Carry on, Minister.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Maybe this will make the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek happy: Bill 8 puts hard caps on executive compensation—and you voted against it. Your bill deals only with people who are hitting that maximum of \$480,000. Our bill covers all people, all executives with compensation well below that.

The member opposite goes on about raises to CCAC CEOs. His bill does not capture that, because none of them are at twice the Premier's salary max. The bill you voted against addresses that; your bill does not.

So in honour of David Letterman, I have put together the top five reasons to vote against this bill.

Number 5: This bill—

Interjections.

1440

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock one more time.

I know the member for Timmins–James Bay and the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek would like me to allow the heckling, but I think we need to be a little civilized, so can we keep the heckling down?

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, I ask you to come to order.

Carry on, Minister.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The number 5 reason to vote against this bill: This bill explicitly states that the cap would not apply to salaries currently being paid in the broader public private sector. If someone stays in the same job, they keep their current salary even if our review shows that they're overpaid. In contrast, our bill applies to all executives in the broader public sector, after a three-year notice period, even if they stay in the same job.

The number 4 reason to vote against this bill: There's no enforcement, no compliance—what is your plan to hold people to that cap? I think they are suggesting the honour system. Our bill includes significant compliance and enforcement measures, including requiring the organizations to repay the amount over and above what's authorized.

The number 3 reason to vote against this bill: We're taking the guesswork out by providing a clear and detailed definition of what compensation is. That way, we won't end up with these great big loopholes that are included in the bill we're discussing today.

The number 2 reason to vote against this bill: We already passed a bill.

Finally, the number 1 reason to vote against this bill: It does nothing for any executive with compensation less than \$480,000. All of the other examples that you've been talking about would not be captured in this bill. They are captured in our bill.

The third party has a good bumper sticker here, but it's bad public policy. They're looking for a quick political win.

We are taking a strong, fair, evidence-based approach by creating these frameworks. We're doing our homework. We're setting reasonable compensation caps.

I know the NDP doesn't like it when I do this, but I'm going to remind them once again: They voted against Bill 8. They forced an unnecessary election. They delayed Bill 8 implementation.

I look forward to hearing further debate in this House. I look forward to hearing what people have to say, but I certainly will stand in my place and vote no to this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 124, the Capping Top Public Sector Salaries Act.

The bill enacts the Capping Top Public Sector Salaries Act of 2015. Under the act, a public sector employee's salary shall not exceed the amount that is twice the Premier's annual salary. We've heard this. Exceptions are provided for salaries that were established before the bill comes into force, for salaries that are established under a collective agreement, and for salaries of employees prescribed by regulation for work of a scientific or technical nature.

While we have voted twice against this in the past, circumstances have changed. In light of the outrageous salaries at Hydro One and in light of the egregiousness of the Hydro One executive salaries when compared to their counterparts in Quebec, we are going to support this bill.

When we look at the exorbitant pay increases going to executives at the community care access centres, it further solidifies the case for capping the salaries.

Let's first look at the situation at Hydro One. The Liberal government's alarming compensation packages to Hydro One executives totalling \$24 million, in conjunction with the fire sale of this crown asset, is a slap in the face to average Ontario families who can't afford to pay those hydro bills or make ends meet.

According to the Toronto Star, Hydro One's chief executive, Mayo Schmidt, started work September 3 and by the end of the year will enjoy \$1.36 million in base pay, incentives and pension value. The man he succeeded, Carmine Marcello, got \$1.2 million for all of 2014.

Electricity rates are based on the costs of running Hydro One, which will now surely increase because of these exorbitant salaries, severances and gold-plated pensions. It's no wonder that Ed Clark and Premier Wynne cannot and will not confirm that electricity prices will not increase as a result of the fire sale of Hydro One, because they knew what the compensation packages were going to cost when they started this. Since the Wynne Liberals have removed independent oversight, Ontarians won't ever know if we received fair value for this asset.

It's clear, based on the fat-cat payouts for the Hydro One transition team, that Premier Wynne is not in it for Ontario any longer and is out of touch with families. She doesn't understand their daily struggles to make ends meet, including keeping the lights on. Her priorities are not those of Ontario. Premier Wynne should listen to the thousands of Ontarians who believe that this sale will increase their hydro bills and who are deeply offended when they hear of these enormous executive salaries.

Speaker, I'm going to tell you the story I've told in this Legislature before of Jennifer, a woman whom all three parties met at the pre-budget consultations in Ottawa. Jennifer sat in front of the parties and she told us that she has to turn her electricity off every morning at 6 a.m., turn it back on again at noon, turn it off at 3 p.m. in the afternoon and turn it on again at 7 p.m., so that she can have enough money to buy food. That's what has happened to the hydro system here in the province of Ontario.

It doesn't end there, Speaker. Last week, the Auditor General released her report on community care access

centres, and it was shocking, quite frankly. We learned that only 61% of CCAC dollars go to face-to-face care, while the rest is spent on administration and bureaucracy, not the 92% the government claims. That is \$900 million and five times more money diverted from direct patient care than they led us to believe. But just as offensive as that: CCACs' CEO salaries skyrocketed by 27% between 2009 and 2013. Again, it gets to the crux of this bill and what it aims to do. It aims to prevent patients from being told that they must wait to receive the care that they desperately need, with 47% of patients not being visited at home within 24 hours of being discharged from hospital, as an example. The government failed when they allowed 40% of the funding to go directly to bureaucracy, and, as the CCACs cry poor and turn away Ontario's most frail, that is unacceptable.

The government must take action now to take an approach that puts patients, not administrative waste, at the centre of decision-making. If Ontarians are concluding that this government isn't up to the job, I'd have a hard time, Speaker, arguing against them.

In conclusion, in light of the out-of-control executive salaries at Hydro One and at the CCACs, it's clear that this government can't be trusted to do the right thing, and I look forward to supporting this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's interesting, sometimes, the dialogue that you hear back and forth, because the President of the Treasury Board said, "Oh, the PCs brought in these bonuses," when this discussion was happening. Of course, the Liberals doubled down on those bonuses, and that is why we have to continue to bring motions. This is the third similar motion that we've brought to the floor of this Legislature to get public sector executive salaries under control. Then I also heard the Minister of Tourism—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Associate Minister of Long-Term Care and the Minister without Portfolio, would you both come to order?

Ms. Catherine Fife: —say, very clearly, "You know that those Pan Am executives who are making all of this money start looking for a job six months before the games start." Well, design a contract that says that you stay to the end of your contract and then you get paid. You shouldn't have to pay somebody twice their salary just to stick around to do their job. What I see very clearly from this government, and we have example after example, is that you have the inability to actually do your financial and fiduciary due diligence on contracts.

1450

The Auditor General has identified so many instances where the i's were not dotted, the t's were not crossed. She found this government was awarding contracts to winter road maintenance companies that didn't have the equipment to do the work. We found the Auditor General identified that 61% of the funding to CCACs is all that goes to the front line. The rest of it is going to a growing

number of executives. We have executives who have assistant executives, who have vice-presidents of executives in the CCACs, which is not benefiting the front-line staff who are often paying. We had to fight for a minimum of \$15 an hour for a PSW.

And then, of course, the contract with Ontera, which is just this week's scandal, really. Every week offers another example.

Infrastructure Ontario had to hire \$6.5-million worth of consultants to determine that a \$61-million company could be bought for \$6 million.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You can't make it up.

Ms. Catherine Fife: You can't make it up, Mr. Speaker.

You can't blame us for continuing to try to hold the line on these ridiculous salaries because people in the province of Ontario have had it.

The President of the Treasury Board says we've come late to the party. Let me tell you, you have been partying on the taxpayers' dime. You are drinking red, and the people of this province are seeing red.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Yvan Baker: It's an honour to rise to join the debate on this bill. It's a particular honour to speak following the President of the Treasury Board.

When I was campaigning—and I've shared this story with some of you before—as we all do, I heard a lot of feedback from my constituents in Etobicoke Centre. The people in my community said a range of things. They certainly made it clear that they expected that we would be strong shepherds of the taxpayer dollar, that we would spend their dollars wisely, that we would be fiscally responsible.

But they also spoke about the various services that they expect from their government, things like quality health care, quality community care, quality education, post-secondary education, infrastructure and all the other things that we debate in this Legislature every single day. Taxpayers have a right to know how their dollars are spent but they also want strong services. They also want strong leadership to ensure we're providing those services that I just spoke about, that they expect and they demand from their government.

When I think about that, that's why I'm so proud to stand here today. I'll speak to the bill in a minute, but I'm proud to follow the minister because that's what I have the privilege of working with her on every single day, with her and her team. I had the privilege of working with her on Bill 8. I have the privilege of working with her every single day on thinking about how to make sure we get good value for the taxpayer dollar while also delivering strong services for Ontarians.

Now I have the privilege to rise and speak to this important issue. I want to share with you that I share, just as the minister does, the frustration around executive compensation. But to address the problem, we need to do exactly what the minister is doing right now, which was enabled by Bill 8.

Let me remind the members opposite what Bill 8 does. When we passed the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act—the act came into force in March—it allowed the government to put in place hard caps on executive salaries, including universities and colleges. The restraint applies to designated executives and office-holders who earn \$100,000 or more per year at hospitals, universities, colleges, school boards and Ontario's hydro entities.

Mr. Speaker, our government is the first in Ontario's history to legislate caps. The NDP didn't do it; the PCs didn't do it. We are the first. In fact, the NDP voted against the bill that's enabling us to do just that.

We're taking a thoughtful, evidence-based approach to controlling executive compensation. It is important that we're thoughtful and that we do our homework on this. What that means is identifying what works best in other jurisdictions so that the caps we implement are reasonable and allow us to manage public dollars responsibly while continuing to attract good talent.

I started by telling the story about my constituents, who want strong services but also want value for money. That requires a balanced approach, that's what Bill 8 enables and that's what the minister is in the midst of implementing.

Mr. Paul Miller: Five million dollars is a balanced approach?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, you are named.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Bill 8 also enables, and the minister is implementing, significant—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, if you haven't heard me, you're named.

Mr. Paul Miller was escorted from the chamber.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Continue.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Thank you, Speaker.

The plan also includes significant compliance and enforcement measures, which, for example, would require organizations to repay any amount that is above the compensation frameworks. The frameworks will be fully applicable to existing executives following a three-year transition period.

I believe the member's bill that we're debating today falls short in a number of ways. First of all, it's just an utterly blunt instrument. Secondly, it doesn't consider the sector-by-sector issues, the individual-by-individual issues, that the minister is working on to make sure that we can attract the best talent but also deliver those strong services that the people of our communities expect. It also, as the minister pointed out, applies only to those folks who are making twice the Premier's salary today, which is about \$440,000. It wouldn't touch those CCACs that he so passionately spoke about a few moments ago, and it wouldn't address a whole series of other executives in the public sector. Our bill, Bill 8, and the work that the minister is doing, touches folks with incomes of

\$100,000 or more. The bill doesn't even do what the member says it's going to do.

In addition to that, there are a few other things I want to raise. The government's legislation applies immediately to new hires, to those who have changed positions and to all executives after a three-year period. The private member's bill, in contrast, explicitly states that the cap would not apply to any salaries established before the act comes into force. In other words, it wouldn't apply to salaries currently being paid in the broader public sector. So basically, most of the folks in the broader public sector wouldn't get touched by this bill.

The government's approach to compensation control realizes that there should be mechanisms in place to ensure accountability and respect for any restraints imposed, and so we have compliance and enforcement measures, which the member doesn't have.

The member only talks about salary in his bill. There is much compensation that goes beyond salary. There are various forms of compensation. The minister is working on that. This bill does not address that.

I started by talking about the fact that the members of my community and Ontarians expect strong services and value for money. The member's bill doesn't ensure value for money and it doesn't ensure strong services; in fact, it could harm strong services. The bill doesn't do what the member claims it will do, and for that reason I stand against it and I hope we all defeat it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to join in the debate today. I want to take the few moments that I have by responding to the previous speaker because I, too, will be supporting this bill, but the reason for that is because we need this kind of fulsome discussion. That's the point of having private members' time, so that we can look at things that we might want to move on in second reading.

I think the criticisms that have been suggested are ones that demonstrate not the intent of the author of this bill to bring this back into the Legislature for more fulsome discussion. While, as my colleague a few minutes ago remarked, we have in previous times voted against this, today we will be supporting it. It comes because of the fact that we keep seeing more examples of the gap between people who have responsible senior jobs but don't earn hundreds of thousands of dollars and some who do. When you look at the growing sunshine list, the outrageous salaries at Hydro One and the increased pay of CEOs in community care access centres, this brings about the opportunity that there is a clear and important need for fiscal restraint.

1500

I'm going to speak about, first, the CCAC dollars, because the Auditor General made public her findings earlier this week. One of the things that was very disconcerting was that in her findings, she said that 61% of CCAC dollars go to face-to-face care. This means that 40% of the budget is going to administration.

This comes at a particularly sensitive time for members of the chamber because we hear the phone calls. We take the phone calls of the people who are having their services either reduced or simply eliminated. So it seems to us to be a discrepancy that we cannot support when you have increases in salary in the nature of 54% between 2009 and 2013. This just can't be justified. How can someone go from \$181,000 to \$277,000? For starters, that seems like a very generous base salary.

We have, in York region, in the Central CCAC, 43 people on the sunshine list. While we recognize that it's important that we have to set salaries to attract the highest-quality and the highest-skilled professionals, when you start looking at that argument that the government uses, you can find some interesting contrasts.

I came across, in my research, a snapshot which shows that this is anything but the case. Consider, for example, the pension CEO pay. The three top-paid pension CEOs in the world—all three, the top three—are all from Canada. Their salaries range from \$2.5 million to just over \$7 million. Yet Canadians do not enjoy the highest rates of return on our investments.

If you take that and look at the very poorly planned ORPP scheme, they are going to have to set a salary for a pension board manager. While the CEO of the CPP walks away with just over \$3 million per year, he brought in a return of 16.5%. The Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan CEO earned \$2.5 million for a 10% return on investment. These are among the highest pension salaries in the world. The highest-paid executive of the AustralianSuper fund earns just about \$1 million; the CEO of ABP in the Netherlands, \$800,000; and the CEO of CalPERS in the United States, just over \$400,000. I cite these as some examples to highlight the fact that multi-million dollar salaries for public sector pension employees appear to be a strictly Canadian occurrence.

To attract the best and the brightest in the business, we simply do not need such generous salaries. Of course we need to reward talent and experience; however, we must also be accountable to the taxpayers. The question that must frame any salary is: Is this appropriate?

There is a public expectation of fiscal prudence that must be respected. In this fiscal climate, where the Premier insists that the only way she can pay for her infrastructure plan is by selling Hydro One and creating an ill-advised pension, public sector compensation must be kept in check.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to the bill today, and thank you to the member from Timmins-James Bay for bringing this bill forward.

This is a very important bill for the people of Ontario. The people of Ontario need to have faith that their government is going to spend their money wisely. Right now, that isn't happening. Instead, the people of Ontario have watched their government waste billions of dollars, from the gas plants to eHealth to Ornge and now the

reckless privatization of Hydro One. This government, time and time again, has shown a staggering disregard for the people of Ontario and their hard-earned money. This bill is an important step in stopping that. Instead of spending millions of dollars in CEO salaries, we will cap them at double the Premier's salary.

In 2012, this government spent \$18 million to cover salaries that were over the cap that the member from Timmins—James Bay is putting forward today. That's \$18 million that could have been spent on so many different things in the province of Ontario. How about repairing our schools or keeping them open in Niagara-on-the-Lake and Windsor; more nurses to help seniors in an aging population; and one that's near and dear to my heart: supporting the Fort Erie Race Track?

In that same year, the finance minister, Dwight Duncan, said about his government, "It will work to bring some of the overly generous compensation packages back to reality." He went on to tell everyone that the government would move forward with the cap that is being proposed today by our member. I'm not sure why he only wanted to bring some of them back to reality and not all of them, but maybe his friends weren't happy about their pay being reduced, or maybe he was hoping to get one of those packages himself. Who knows? It doesn't really matter now, though, because clearly that didn't happen. Not that it would have surprised anyone that this government broke a promise.

Of course, that wasn't the first time this bill was brought up. I won't say—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Who writes these speeches?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Well, I'm not reading the paper—"introduced" because the government didn't even get that close to keeping their promise. No. The first time this cap was introduced was in 2010 by our own leader, the member from Hamilton Centre. She also introduced it again in 2013 after the government had broken their promise.

I say now is the time to get it done. It won't affect the contracts that are currently in place, but it will have a huge impact going forward. There are currently more—and think about this—there are currently more than 200 executives who make more than double what the Premier makes. That makes 200 ways this government can save money and help the people of Ontario in a very simple move. All they need to do is support this bill and cap public sector CEO salaries.

According to the IPO the government put out about their reckless privatization of Hydro One, the CEO of the new private company would make \$4 million a year. That is a 500% increase from the current CEO. How many in this chamber got a 500% increase in their wages? Anybody here?

This is simply ridiculous. The current CEO of Manitoba Hydro made \$463,000 in 2014. Can this government really stand there and tell the House that the difference between those two jobs is worth \$3.5 million? Somehow, I doubt they can.

This morning the government spent a lot of time telling us they couldn't afford to increase pay for the best

doctors in the world, Ontario doctors. They can't afford to do that, but they can afford a 27% increase in CEO salaries at CCACs over the last four years. Again, that's ridiculous. Yet we can't get a collective agreement at CarePartners for our nurses in Niagara. And the CCAC HNHB, in anticipation of the AG's report on CCACs, walked out 10 middle managers in one day last week. Does that tell you how top heavy they are, that they can get rid of 10 in one day?

This government has broken promise after promise and wasted billions of dollars in the fallout. It's time for them to stand up and do the right thing. It's time to cap public sector CEO salaries.

1510

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to join the debate, although it does feel like déjà vu all over again. I had the privilege to be here as a member in 2013, when our leader, Andrea Horwath, introduced a very similar motion—I think it was exactly the same—requesting that the government cap CEO salaries at twice the rate of the Premier's salary.

I listened intently to the members of the government who, in defence of their inaction on this issue, attempted to point to Bill 8 as the remedy for all things when it comes to public sector CEO salaries and the high—unacceptably high—levels of salaries we are seeing. I will remind the government that Bill 8 was born out of one of their biggest failures, the Ornge air ambulance scandal, in which they hired a guy who bilked millions of dollars from the public purse and was paying himself upwards of a million dollars for not delivering any service whatsoever. Out of their own failure, a bill was born to address what we know was rampant and continues to be within the public sector at the CEO level, and yet they have done nothing to address the issue.

It was interesting to listen to the member from Etobicoke—Lakeshore. I wonder if he ever imagined himself standing in this place, as a newly elected member, in defence of massive CEO salaries at Ontario Hydro, Hydro One and St. Joe's in Hamilton. These guys are making upwards of a million and a half bucks a year, and he's standing there in defence of the President of the Treasury Board's inaction at the same time as teachers, nurses, educational assistants, public sector workers and doctors in his own community are getting the axe—absolutely being fired and being walked out of their jobs. How does he actually stand here in good conscience and defend the President of the Treasury Board? I wonder if he ever imagined that that would be a part of his job.

I say to you, Speaker, that today is an opportunity for him to stand in defence of his community. He can say, in defence of his community, "We will finally address this issue. We can do something about CEO salaries. We can make it more reasonable. We can send a signal to our communities that we have heard them loud and clear, we've heard that they understand and they know that skyrocketing CEO salaries are adding to their burden

each and every day.” It’s adding to their cost of hydro; it’s adding to the cuts in the services they see in their community.

Shame on this government if they are not hearing that message. It has been a long time coming.

We’ve tried unsuccessfully to pass a bill. It is interesting that we’re now going to have the PCs’ support on this. Even they have come to their senses, Speaker. Can you imagine? Could we please get someone on the government side to realize that we’re only asking for fairness here, and it’s based out of concern from our communities.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the member for Timmins—James Bay for a two-minute response.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to thank all the members who participated in the debate—even the government members, for putting their views on the record. I just want to say to my colleagues on the government side that what you’re arguing is this, “Well, we passed a bill and there’s no longer a problem.” If that’s the case, why did the president of Western get a half-million dollar increase? Why did the Pan Am executives get a doubling of their salaries by way of bonuses they got to complete their jobs? Why is it that the new Hydro CEO went from \$750,000 a year to \$4 million a year? Clearly your bill—

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: It’s a contract.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: “It’s a contract,” she says. Some contract. Line up and get one if you can.

The point is: It has not fixed the problem. In the first part, the government says that the problem is fixed because they passed Bill 8. The fact is that this is still going on. It’s rampant, and something needs to be done.

The second argument I would make is this. I listened to the minister intently: “Well, your bill doesn’t do this, and your bill doesn’t do that.” Fine. Not a problem. Send the darned thing to committee. I’m open to amendment. If you think you can strengthen this bill by fixing parts of it that could be made better, hey, I’m all for that. That’s what the committee process is all about. So vote for the bill and send it off to committee.

For my new-found socialist friends in the Conservative caucus, I just have to say that I’m sure Leslie Frost and other people in the past of this party would be very proud of the shift to the left on the part of the Conservatives.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister without Portfolio, would you come to order, and that’s my third warning.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I only hope that you are able to tell Mr. Harper to do the same kind of thing, because the kinds of things that he has done are pretty right-wing, so I’ll take the support when I can get it. That’s good that the Conservatives have come around to our way of thinking. I think that is what’s important here: that this is not partisan left-right politics: NDP, Liberal or Conservative. This is about doing what’s right for the people back home.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will take the vote on the item at the end of private members’ bills.

MISSING PERSONS

Ms. Catherine Fife: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should, through legislation, enhance the tools available to law enforcement agencies in their search for missing persons while protecting individual rights and freedoms enshrined within the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Fife has moved private member’s notice of motion number 57. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation. The member for Kitchener—Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Before I begin, I would like to welcome Maureen and Don Trask to the Ontario Legislature. They have been very instrumental in this entire journey, really, and have provided hundreds of petitions calling on the government to act on missing persons legislation.

As MPPs, we hold a position of privilege and a responsibility to bring the voices of our constituents—their concerns, their stories—and we are called to find solutions. This resolution calls for a legislative solution to the issue of missing persons where criminal activity is not suspected at the time that the person is reported missing. Any proposed legislation will need to strike the appropriate balance between access to key information and privacy rights, which is why the charter is named in the motion.

We have already been in conversation with the Canadian Civil Liberties Association and respective police forces. As in other provinces, we have the opportunity to craft a piece of legislation that would be inclusive of the rights of those who are vulnerable and at risk. This is possible, as other provinces have done so. It is simply a case of political will.

For those of you who are wondering, when we refer to missing persons, who we’re referring to, a missing person is someone whose whereabouts are unknown despite reasonable efforts to search for this person and whose safety and welfare may be at risk. These are parents with dementia. These are children with mental health issues. They are hikers or those seeking adventures. And yes, this is inclusive of missing aboriginal women and youth.

How did we get here? The struggles of families whose loved ones have gone missing first came to my attention through Maureen Trask and her husband Don, constituents whose son had gone missing north of Temagami. In 2011, Maureen’s son Daniel travelled north to Temagami with few supplies, and disappeared. Because no foul play was suspected, the police were not able to conduct a full investigation. When there is no evidence of criminal intent, police do not have the authority to investigate. They cannot open banking records or compel information, like

phone or text records. Many people do not know this. To quote Maureen:

“When my son Daniel went missing in 2011, I couldn’t know the barriers I would face in trying to find answers. It shocked me and other local families to learn that police have no ability to access personal information or locations of our missing adults when there is no evidence of crime.

“How can this be? How can you assume there is no crime if police can’t even get access to information? Missing persons legislation would have helped my family, and will help countless families by giving equal investigative opportunity to find answers. We found Daniel this year but too many other families are still looking, they deserve answers too. Other provinces have implemented legislation; it’s now time for Ontario. It’s the right thing to do to help find missing persons.”

1520

From 2011 until 2015, Maureen and Don had no idea what had happened to their son. Daniel’s remains were found near the town of Temiskaming Shores last spring. For years, Maureen and her husband were left wondering and, I’m sure, in a permanent state of pain. I can’t imagine, as a parent, how difficult those years were. Maureen said back in 2013, “This is not a traditional death. We can’t have a funeral or a memorial because what if” Daniel “shows up? Nobody could have described this to me. You have to live it, breathe it to understand. It’s in your skin. You’re frozen in time.”

There is precedent, though, for this House. In British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Saskatchewan, legislation on missing persons has been introduced that helps to provide families like Maureen’s with some degree of comfort. Other provinces have moved forward on this issue. They have passed missing persons legislation. It is time that we do the same.

There are 20 active missing persons cases in Waterloo region at this moment. There are almost 400 across the province of Ontario. The families of these Ontarians are still wondering and looking for assistance. They are not looking for closure. They are looking for justice.

This is an issue that affects every community across this province. There are those who go out into the wilderness like Daniel Trask, but there are also those suffering from mental illness, particularly elderly persons living with dementia and Alzheimer’s. Two hundred thousand people in the province of Ontario currently have some form of dementia. The Alzheimer Society says that over half of those people at some point will go missing. There is no foul play suspected in these cases, and so this limits the options of families to search for their loved ones. But vulnerable Ontarians need protection, and this legislation would allow families and the respective police agencies the tools to investigate.

Maureen has said that these families deserve answers. We should help them to find these answers. We should pass an Ontario missing persons act.

There are concerns, on the other side of this equation, around privacy. However, in conversations with the civil

liberties associations and John Howard societies across the country, some provinces have done a better job, to be honest, than others to address these issues. We should learn from their experience, Mr. Speaker. We’re in a unique position to benefit from other provinces’ mistakes. We could build and craft a piece of legislation which is stronger and which learns from those experiences.

The formulation of this legislation to allow police to investigate missing persons while keeping in mind the protections to individual privacy in keeping with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is possible. There are no more excuses to not move forward.

The Attorney General for BC last year stated publicly, “This legislation acknowledges that access to relevant records can sometimes mean the difference between life and death.”

With knowledge, though, comes the responsibility to act. There are many voices of support for this legislation. They first came forward in support of the petition that was introduced in this House, which I sponsored and was motivated to do so by Maureen and Don. These voices, these associations are the Canadian Mental Health Association, Community Justice Initiatives, Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council, Friends of Temagami. The police chiefs of Ontario have endorsed in principle the concept of having additional tools to look for missing persons.

The province of Ontario, with all-party support, can and should strike the critical balance between disclosing and protecting information with the safety and welfare of vulnerable people as its paramount goal.

We can also ensure that Daniel Trask and the journey that his parents and other families have been on have not been in vain. We can prevent future pain and suffering when a family member goes missing by introducing and crafting a made-in-Ontario missing persons act which reflects what needs to happen in this province. It should be our privilege and responsibility to do so. We need more than sympathy; we need more than empathy; we need more than indifference. We are in a unique position in this House, as individual legislators, to take action and to motivate action in this regard.

It is my pleasure to bring this motion to the floor. I hope that the government, the Attorney General and the minister are listening intently. There are no more excuses not to take action on this issue.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Granville Anderson: I will be sharing my time with the member from Newmarket–Aurora.

My compliments to the member from Kitchener–Waterloo for bringing this motion forward. I love the debates we have in this House, but I enjoy when we can agree on something that is of benefit to all Ontarians. I am glad today to be speaking in support of this motion.

I want to thank the member for her passion on this subject as well. I know she has spoken many times on this, so I congratulate her on bringing this message to the House today.

The member for Kitchener–Waterloo has often spoken about how Alzheimer's and dementia play a factor in missing persons and providing police with more purview to assist individuals and families in need when those afflicted tend to wander.

I am fortunate enough to represent the kind of place where younger families move to raise their kids, where you have our lovely countryside, safe neighbourhoods and our good schools while also having easy access to recreation and the sights of the city. The dynamic in our type of community is quickly shifting, and has really already shifted to now raising teenagers while also caring for elderly parents.

I also have several passionate older persons' organizations in my riding. In the riding of Durham, about 20% of the population are seniors.

While I acknowledge that Alzheimer's and dementia are not exclusively older persons' concerns—recently there was a rather poignant article in Maclean's, I believe, about a man with dementia at 38 years old—I know that care and safety for persons with Alzheimer's and dementia is of paramount importance to many of my constituents.

I know that our regional police do an excellent job of aiding these families, but I know that wandering is a unique situation that requires a certain finesse on the part of officers. So I think expanding their powers to track down someone who wanders or really anyone who goes missing for any reason is very, very important. I simply can't imagine the frustration and fears that go through someone who can't find a family member, especially if it's a child or a person under their care.

I know how much we rely on officers to know what to do and to help us, so I very much am in favour of providing these tools to law enforcement.

I know that our government is making movements on this front in determining how best to approach these new tools for law enforcement, and I know that the member from Halton is doing a wonderful job on the Alzheimer's front. But I want to focus today on the qualifying portion of the motion, which I think is very important, and I thank the member for Kitchener–Waterloo for adding it.

The end of the motion that the member just read asks us to ensure that in providing these tools to law enforcement, we protect the individual rights and freedoms provided in the Constitution. I know there are other provinces that allow warrantless entry if a missing person is suspected in a home or personal residence, and while I trust the discretion of our law enforcement in times of crisis, I caution that this type of behaviour and these tools we provide not overextend themselves into violations of privacy and rights.

1530

Fundamentally, the freedom from unreasonable search and seizure and the right to security of the person must be weighed in our considerations so we do not create the type of surveillance state that I imagine the federal government envisions but hopefully, after October, never has the chance to implement.

So I hope that we all agree on this motion, but my suggestion is certainly to highlight the qualifying portion of this motion and to ensure that these rights, and all others, are upheld entirely.

Thank you again to the member from Kitchener–Waterloo for raising this issue here in the House, and I thank her for the important way that motion was worded. I look forward to supporting this motion, and I would encourage all my colleagues to do the same.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for Kitchener–Conestoga.

Mr. Michael Harris: Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to this important motion, brought forward by my fellow Kitchener–Waterloo colleague, to respond to the call of families in our area and indeed across Ontario to “enhance the tools available to law enforcement agencies in their search for missing persons while protecting individual rights and freedoms enshrined within the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.”

This is both a timely motion and one that is close to our hearts in the Waterloo region. Following the tragic outcome to a mother's quest to find her son—and his father's, who is here today; Maureen and Don Trask, thank you for coming—who disappeared in the woods of Temagami, never to return.

As you've heard, I speak of Maureen and Don Trask, who, after years of fruitless searching for their son that was continually hampered by a lack of provincial support resources, turned to her provincial legislators to bring her story and her call for support to Queen's Park.

As the member from Kitchener–Waterloo has detailed, Daniel Trask was 28 years old when he disappeared. It was the discovery of his car near a camp at Ferguson Bay that led searchers and Daniel's family to comb through the vast forested wilderness surrounding the Temagami area. The search included divers, cadaver dogs, float planes and a volunteer backwoods rescue group from Michigan. But it wasn't until this past year that the remains of the Waterloo man who vanished into the wilds of northern Ontario were finally and sadly discovered.

In the three years in between, the lack of tools and increasing barriers that Mr. and Mrs. Trask and their family encountered as they looked for help to find their son prompted the Trask family and others to push for support through provincial government legislation.

Indeed, that's why we're here today discussing this important motion, and that's why Maureen and Lindy Smith, who also encountered difficulties in her search for a missing loved one, visited our offices to see what enhancements the province could offer those facing the unimaginable pain of searching for loved ones who have disappeared.

It was after their visit to my office that I wrote the minister, asking for the government's response and action. As time allows, I will read a few excerpts from the November 24, 2014, letter:

“I am writing this letter to you on behalf of two mothers who met with me to express their concerns regarding the need for a missing persons act in Ontario.

"Maureen Trask and Lindy Smith, who have both experienced missing loved ones, have voiced the need for families to have access to pertinent information that will help in investigating missing person cases.

"As both Mrs. Trask and Mrs. Smith advised, police cannot access possible locations or personal information if there is no criminal activity suspected. This poses a problem for families who are missing a loved one as there is very little they can do without access to this critical information."

The petition they have provided spells out the concerns clearly: Ontario does not have missing persons legislation; police are not able to conduct a thorough investigation upon receipt of a missing person report where criminal activity is not considered the cause; which impedes investigators in determining the status and possibly the location of missing persons; legislation exists and is effective in other provinces; and negotiating rights to safety that do not violate rights to privacy has been a challenge in establishing missing persons law.

Specifically, the families with missing loved ones have highlighted the need for investigators to gain access to records in cases where crime is not evident. If authorities could access this information, they would be better able to execute timely and sensitive investigative services leading to the discovery of missing persons.

As I noted, other provinces have already taken action by implementing missing persons acts, provinces such as Nova Scotia, Manitoba and Alberta. These provinces have been able to navigate missing persons' information without violating people's rights to privacy. It's time we consider what Ontario can do to help.

I can tell you what Waterloo region has already done to help. In the wake of the Trask case, the Waterloo Regional Police Service, led by Chief Larkin and, of course, our former chief, Matt Torigian, have taken steps toward a permanent unit that specializes in solving disappearances as they change the way they handle missing person cases—a first step towards a permanent unit that specializes in solving disappearances. Last September, Waterloo region police reassigned two homicide branch investigators to solving missing person cases on a full-time basis. The pair were mandated to focus primarily on finding the missing, including children and the elderly, while another officer was assigned cases involving teenagers. Now, that's a step, Speaker, but it's just one solitary step in one community.

Today, we are looking to the government for province-wide responses and further steps that would help families right across Ontario. There are around 370 long-term missing-adult cases here in our province: 370 families searching for loved ones, including about 20 involving people from Waterloo region. As we've heard, the specific problem we're hoping to address is that adult cases often exist in legal limbo. When there is no evidence of crime, police are blocked from getting court orders that could help solve their case.

While the motion we are discussing today is general in its call, I'm led to understand that it is the Manitoba

model of missing persons legislation that the Kitchener-Waterloo MPP is hoping can be replicated on this side of the provincial border. Thanks to forward-thinking legislators in Manitoba who identified similar concerns in searching for missing persons, officers in that province are able to use the Missing Persons Act to access store surveillance footage and phone records, as well as Internet and banking information, to track down missing people. Similar to the Ontario experience, previous to the Missing Persons Act, officers couldn't access this type of information unless there was evidence that a crime had been committed. That's why this Manitoba legislation allows the police to get specific information about a missing person when criminal activity is not suspected at the time the person is reported missing.

In addition to the information that police can obtain under the act I mentioned a minute ago, the Manitoba legislation allows for a whole new realm of information and different types of court orders that give them the authority to get information, including a search that allows police to enter a dwelling or other premises to search for missing minors or vulnerable persons, and a record access order giving the police access to records that may help them find that missing person.

In emergency situations, situations in which the police believe a missing person may be at imminent risk of serious bodily harm or death, police can make a written demand directly to any person for access to and copies of certain specific records that are in the custody or under the control of that person. It's hoped that the emergency demand gives the police immediate access to certain records that could help them find the missing person before that person is harmed. The types of information that can be demanded under a record access order can also include global positioning system tracking records, inbound and outbound text messages, information about travel or accommodation, employment information, and personal health and school attendance information.

1540

Speaker, we do understand the inherent privacy issues, given the nature of the information being requested. It's for that reason that in the Manitoba example, safeguards are in place to ensure a high level of privacy. Limits have been placed on the length of time the police can keep the information in their files. Internal access to the files must also be limited to those persons directly involved with the investigation. Personal information and personal health information obtained under the act must be protected and securely disposed of in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and the Personal Health Information Protection Act. The act also requires police forces to give annual reports on how they use the information.

Again, it is this type of legislation that today's motion is speaking to, to enhance the tools available to law enforcement agencies while protecting individual rights and freedoms enshrined within the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Given the heartbreaking stories that families with missing loved ones are forced to live

through, there is no doubt that Ontario needs to do more to ensure that law enforcement agencies have the proper tools to search for missing persons.

While the Trasks and families across Ontario who have faced barriers in their search for loved ones are calling on the province to help, it's well past time that we act to answer their call. Again, I commend the member from Kitchener–Waterloo for bringing this motion forward, and I would ask all of you to support this motion today and support the call of so many who have waited too long for this province to act.

Speaker, I would like to take the last minute to thank Maureen and Don, not only for coming to the Legislature today to hear the debate, but for their work. Obviously, you struggled for some time, worrying about where your son was. But when you met with me in my office, I know that you had concerns for other families that have had to go through a similar horrific experience. I thank you for putting the time in. Far too often, people are obviously concerned with their loved ones, and when they come to a conclusion or an end, that's it. I commend you, again, for taking the time, putting signatures to petitions and bringing them to us as members of the Legislature.

I thank the member for Kitchener–Waterloo for taking this up. It's important. I hope we can pass this today, and I hope the government will take it back and act upon it, so that memories such as your son's and the horrific instances until his discovery won't be faced by families in the future. Thank you for coming today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, it is my honour to rise today, on behalf of the residents of London–Fanshawe, and speak to my colleague's motion on missing persons legislation. The member from Kitchener–Waterloo is truly a very compassionate person to bring the tragedy that occurred with the Trask family here and show that she is really a strong advocate and really cares about what she does and the people she represents.

Unfortunately, Speaker, this issue is sometimes a reality for too many Ontarians. When a friend, neighbour or a family member goes missing, it is a huge loss for a community and for their loved ones. In fact, just a week ago in my hometown of London, a young woman did go missing. With little information about where she had been or who last saw her, people were really worried. Fortunately, she was found just a couple of days ago. It happens, unfortunately, too often for our liking.

Speaker, there are many cases where children go missing, as we're talking about today—loved ones and children—and some of them are found. Some of them are not found, and those are not conclusions that we ever want to face. In cases where there is no foul play, there are a series of barriers for the police and the family to help. There are barriers that face police and family, and they can't really move forward and help to locate that person.

My colleague from Kitchener–Waterloo is putting forward this motion after a young man in her riding who went missing in 2011. Maureen Trask, her mom and her dad are here today, and their 20-year-old son. They did an extensive search, as we're talking about. I can't imagine feeling how that would play out in your life, not knowing where your child is and not having the tools to actually look for them. It was four years later when they found Daniel's remains through a group of volunteers, and I thank those volunteers for keeping the hope alive to look for Daniel.

Regrettably, it's not an uncommon event, as we talked about, here in the province of Ontario. Today in Canada there are over 1,200 missing and murdered indigenous women, and that's something that has been a very important topic that's come to light. The federal government has said that it's not a priority for them, and I'm glad we're making this a priority here by bringing this motion forward in Ontario. Other provinces have legislation, and we should implement this.

This motion is calling on the government to enhance the tools available to law enforcement agencies in searching for missing persons while protecting the individual rights and freedoms enshrined within the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Other jurisdictions have recently introduced missing persons legislation. We've named those provinces, and I'd like to see Ontario be part of that list. I hope we can have support for this motion in the House in honour of the parents being here today—Mr. and Mrs. Trask—and show that Ontario is going to be a province that's going to lead missing persons legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Chris Ballard: It's a real privilege to be able to stand in the House today to talk about this motion, and I do thank the member from Kitchener–Waterloo for bringing it forward. I know it was brought forward on a very compassionate basis, and it's a motion that I support and that I know we support.

As you know, our government's most important priority is to ensure the safety and security of every Ontarian. There are too many people in our communities across the province who know the pain caused when a loved one goes missing. That's why all of us in this House today must make it a priority to ensure that members of our communities, our neighbours, our friends, our family members—that anyone who goes missing is safely returned.

We support the motion put forward by the member for Kitchener–Waterloo to enhance the tools available to law enforcement agencies in their search for missing persons while protecting individual rights and freedoms enshrined within the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Presently, missing persons legislation, as we've heard, exists in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta to assist police officers in locating missing persons. The legislation in those provinces authorizes members of a

police service or any other person to enter, by force if necessary, a private dwelling or other place if there is a reasonable belief that the missing person may be located there.

I think it's important that as we consider this motion, we also look at how legislation has been implemented in those jurisdictions to see how they have worked to bring missing persons home safely while ensuring that citizens' charter rights are protected. The history of implementation in other jurisdictions will inform what tools we could provide to law enforcement agencies to bring missing persons home safely, and how they have successfully been applied elsewhere.

I want to emphasize and to highlight that our government did not wait for this motion to be tabled before taking up this very important issue. We're already exploring various ways of ensuring that missing persons are returned to their loved ones safely while respecting the privacy rights of Ontarians.

I know the member from Kitchener–Waterloo has previously mentioned that those who most often go missing are the most vulnerable members of our society, such as those who suffer from dementia. Just to insert a personal story here that really drives home the point to focus on returning the most vulnerable safely home: It was a summer ago, amidst one of the biggest heat waves Ontario had seen. I was out cutting my grass, and an elderly gentleman came striding down the street, well dressed, with a sweater on. He looked like he knew where he was going, but he looked a little clouded. We had a conversation, and while I distracted him with a cup of water and more conversation, my wife phoned the police. It turned out he was 12 kilometres from his house. He was a man suffering, perhaps, from the early stages of dementia. When his daughter came to pick him up, the relief on her face spoke volumes. We had a fairly well-organized police force that tracked people with dementia, so we were able to return that gentleman to his loved ones fairly quickly. I can only imagine the stress that the daughter and her family were going through for the few hours that her dad was out wandering in the heat, worried that he may never return.

1550

We're working closely with our partners to ensure that those who suffer from dementia are able to find their way home, as I mentioned.

Mr. Speaker, in 2013 our government launched the Finding Your Way wandering prevention program, in partnership with the Alzheimer Society of Ontario and police. This program offers resources, including a safety kit with an identification form for the individual with dementia, on how people with dementia, their families and their communities can recognize and reduce the risk of wandering, while supporting a quick and safe return should a wandering incident occur.

We're also working on a strategy for those who suffer with dementia, obviously. Last month, the member for Halton began participating in round tables hosted by the local Alzheimer Society chapters and LHINs, with

stakeholders, to inform them and be informed on the development of the first comprehensive dementia strategy. These consultations will have exposure to all regions of the province, including northern, francophone, aboriginal, rural and urban. This is the first phase of consultations, and more are expected late this year. The goal of these consultations will be to consolidate recommendations and feedback to use as the framework for further development of the strategy. One part of the strategy will be to increase dementia education and awareness, to ensure quality, coordinated care for patients with dementia and support early diagnosis and treatment. It's critical that we work to prevent those who suffer from dementia from losing their way, and to help them return home if they do.

I'll simply finish by reiterating once again that I can only imagine, as a parent, the pain that people can suffer and that our guests here today suffer when a loved one does go missing, and their desire to have the tools in place to make sure that their loved one can be found in a timely manner. Anyone who has a toddler who has disappeared for 30 seconds knows the terror that can fill your heart when you look for them. I can only imagine, as a parent, what it's like to go months, if not years, wondering where your loved one has gone.

I'll leave it there, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member again for introducing this, and I look forward to supporting it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's always a pleasure to stand in my place on behalf of the good people of Algoma–Manitoulin.

I want to give a great big shout-out to my colleague the member from Kitchener–Waterloo for bringing her motion 57 for missing persons legislation. I also want to say hi to Don and Maureen; I have a little gift for you after.

I think my colleague brought a very detailed background. We heard from numerous speakers here earlier as to why this motion was introduced and as to why we absolutely need this tool for families in this province.

I am the father of two boys, Roch and Matthieu. I love them. They keep me young. They're growing big. They are getting heavy, but I'm not going to give up on that wrestling. I will always stand up and hold my own with them.

I can just imagine the hopelessness and frustration that they were feeling at that time.

We heard earlier, as well, that there are 307 missing persons cases across the province right now. We know of close to 1,200 missing and murdered aboriginal women across this province, and we seem not to be getting anywhere closer to finding out what happened with them.

It's through my research and talking to some of my community members that I actually came across this this afternoon, and I thought it would be very fitting for both you and Don, Maureen. I want to read it to you. It's a

poem that I found. It's entitled *I Walk Between Worlds*. It starts:

I walk between worlds
plumbing depths of oceans, skimming surfaces of delight
embracing my darkness ... and equally, ... my light

I walk between worlds ... experienced and beginner's
mind
—knowing and naivety ... growing up before my time
—love and human depravity

I walk between worlds ...
the childhood war zone; all the lost lives
—lucky to be alive ...
ever peaceful world of spirit calling me home
—so my soul can again freely roam

I walk between worlds ...
small limited human self in this narrow level of
being ...
vast infinite spirit dancing in the unseen

I walk between worlds ... of First Nations, Métis & white
... government definitions disregard my human right

I walk between worlds ... meaningless labels, definitions
—I will not defend
... My Creator knows who I am ... and I'm at peace ...
in the end

I was sitting in my office earlier wondering what I was going to say, and when I came across this, it came as something that I would think a family member is trying to offer to those who are frustrated, who are knocking on doors, and those doors are not being opened for them or those tools are not available to them.

We all have an opportunity here today to provide the family, to provide many across this province, with a tool. It's not a magic wand, but it is a tool that would be helpful to families. We all have this opportunity here today. We can bring a change. We can help a family, a family like the Trasks.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm happy to add a few minutes to this debate. The motion reads: "That, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should, through legislation, enhance the tools available to law enforcement agencies...." I want to talk briefly about one tool that is extremely important in finding missing persons in northern Ontario, and this is the OPP search-and-rescue helicopter. I know that, today, we want to focus on giving the OPP and the police new tools, but there are existing tools that are being taken away from the people of northern Ontario, and that's wrong.

We can see the goodwill in this House today, that everybody understands that if one of our loved ones goes missing, we should do everything we can to try to find

them. But if you live in northern Ontario—and the family knows that well; they lost their son in northern Ontario—then the resources are not going to be there because the government has decided that both search-and-rescue helicopters should be located in southern Ontario, where there are more people. What does that mean for us in northern Ontario? What does that mean for the visitors who come to our beautiful bush and forests? That means an hour delay.

Right now, hunting season is about to start. Harvesting season is in full blast. I can tell you that my riding will be full with hunters, gatherers, boaters, you name it—soon, snowmobilers. Yet this precious tool that used to be located at the Sudbury airport is being moved to Orillia. That means that, for all of those hunters—and make no mistake, Speaker: A lot of those older gentleman who have started a little bit of dementia still want to be out with the boys and go hunting. A lot of these elderly women who have started a little bit of confusion and dementia or Alzheimer's want to go gathering with the women like they've done all their lives. And they are at risk.

1600

Every single year, the OPP search-and-rescue helicopter in Sudbury saved lives. Why? Because they could get there quickly. Right now, by 7 o'clock in northern Ontario, it is pitch dark. Really, a helicopter can't do anything for us till the next morning. But had this helicopter been dispatched from Sudbury, maybe it would have gotten to that person in time. Frost has already started in northern Ontario. Sleeping in the bush when it's zero degrees and you're 90 years old or you're frail? We know what that means. That means a death sentence to those people.

I, too, will support the motion that has been put forward. I do want the authorities to have all of the tools at their disposal to find missing people. But I am really upset that the OPP helicopter is being moved away. When I asked back in April, "When are you going to do this?" I was told, "Oh, we will review this decision." Since then, I haven't been able to find the terms of reference of this review, I haven't been able to find a single person working on this review and I haven't been able to find when this review will be completed.

You know what, Speaker? I don't think there is a review. I think we have lost this tool and that this hunting season that is coming up may be deadly.

I don't want what happened to this family to be repeated. Unfortunately, we make one step forward with the member from Kitchener–Waterloo's motion and many, many steps back with the loss of the OPP helicopter to serve the people of the northeast. I hope everybody supports this motion, but I also hope you realize that, taking one step forward and four steps back, you're still going backward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the member for Kitchener–Waterloo. You have two minutes.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I think this debate has been a long time coming to this House. I appreciate the feedback

from the members from Durham, London–Fanshawe, Newmarket–Aurora, Algoma–Manitoulin and Nickel Belt. I know that the member from Kitchener–Conestoga has shared in this journey with me as a fellow member of the Legislature. Of course, he spoke passionately about this issue as well.

Going forward is the key piece. The government has expressed support for this motion, and inherently in that motion is the principle that we need legislation on missing persons. So I'm encouraged by that.

I'm a little worried, though, when I hear language like, "We're going to explore some more options, we're going to consolidate our findings and we're going to develop a framework to find a strategy." There are good frameworks already in place. The other provinces have moved forward with this legislation. So we don't have to start at ground zero here. The template is there. Manitoba has a very good template to work from.

Going forward, we're going to continue to involve stakeholders to review legislation, including the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, the Information and Privacy Commissioner, the policing community, and missing persons activists. I want to thank the former chief, Matt Torigan, and our current chief, Bryan Larkin, for their support in this and for giving me feedback on this motion.

The fact of the matter is that these families are not looking for closure—because when you lose a child, that door is never closed; part of you will never be at peace. But they deserve justice; that is what they want. We have that opportunity to give that, and we hold this position of privilege and this responsibility to do so.

I look forward to the government's support but, more importantly, I look forward to action on missing persons legislation in the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES
AMENDMENT ACT (REHABILITATIVE
OR THERAPEUTIC PURPOSES
EXEMPTION), 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LA LOCATION
À USAGE D'HABITATION (EXCLUSION
POUR SERVICES DE RÉADAPTATION
OU SERVICES THÉRAPEUTIQUES)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 67, standing in the name of Ms. Hoggarth.

Ms. Hoggarth has moved second reading of Bill 121, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 with respect to the exemption for living accommodation occupied for the purpose of receiving rehabilitative or therapeutic services.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is being referred to—the member?

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: To the social policy committee, please.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that it be referred to the social policy committee. Agreed? Agreed.

CAPPING TOP PUBLIC SECTOR
SALARIES ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LE PLAFONNEMENT
DES HAUTS TRAITEMENTS
DU SECTEUR PUBLIC

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Bisson has moved second reading of Bill 124, An Act to cap the top public sector salaries. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay." In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will deal with this item after I'm finished with private members' business, and we'll go to the vote.

MISSING PERSONS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Fife has moved private members' notice of motion number 57. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, Speaker, there were noes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I did not hear the noes.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Speaker, that's more than once you've done that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): You've got to shout. I didn't hear it. Sorry.

CAPPING TOP PUBLIC SECTOR
SALARIES ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LE PLAFONNEMENT
DES HAUTS TRAITEMENTS
DU SECTEUR PUBLIC

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1606 to 1611.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can all members please take their seats?

Mr. Bisson has moved second reading of Bill 124, An Act to cap the top public sector salaries. All those in

favour please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.
Arnett, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Bisson, Gilles
Fedeli, Victor
Fife, Catherine
Forster, Cindy
French, Jennifer K.

Gates, Wayne
Gélinas, France
Gretzky, Lisa
Hatfield, Percy
Horwath, Andrea
MacLaren, Jack
Mantha, Michael
Martow, Gila

McDonnell, Jim
Munro, Julia
Natyshak, Taras
Tabuns, Peter
Taylor, Monique
Vanthof, John

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura
Anderson, Granville
Baker, Yvan
Ballard, Chris
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bradley, James J.
Chan, Michael
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Damerla, Dipika
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic

Dickson, Joe
Dong, Han
Duguid, Brad
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Hoggarth, Ann
Hoskins, Eric
Hudak, Tim
Hunter, Mitzie
Kwinter, Monte
MacCharles, Tracy
Malhi, Harinder
Mangat, Amrit

Martins, Cristina
Matthews, Deborah
McGarry, Kathryn
Milczyn, Peter Z.
Murray, Glen R.
Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Potts, Arthur
Qaadri, Shafiq
Sergio, Mario
Wong, Soo
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 22; the nays are 35.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRENGTHENING AND IMPROVING GOVERNMENT ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LE RENFORCEMENT ET L'AMÉLIORATION DE LA GESTION PUBLIQUE

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 17, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 85, An Act to strengthen and improve government by amending or repealing various Acts / *Projet de loi 85, Loi visant à renforcer et à améliorer la gestion publique en modifiant ou en abrogeant diverses lois.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I need to know who's standing. I see too many of you.

The member for Eglinton—Lawrence.

Mr. Mike Colle: It's wonderful to make a comment on Bill 85, the Strengthening and Improving Government Act. It is an act that strengthens many parts of our

government. As you know, this is a multi-billion dollar public entity that does everything from pay for police officers and nurses to dealing with 400 municipalities and hundreds of hospitals. So, from time to time, there have to be adjustments in legislation to bring these important bodies into present-day form.

That's what this act is about: everyday operation of this government to ensure that people have good, safe workplaces, and to ensure that our cities have good, clean drinking water and good sewage systems, which we forget about. I know that in Willowdale they're very concerned about the sewage system, because of all the condos that are going up there. I get a lot of calls from people in Willowdale who say, "Are you sure we've got enough sewer capacity in our city? Is the province funding enough sewers for Willowdale as they build all these condos?"

This is the type of important legislation that we're dealing with this afternoon, to ensure that everything from the City of Toronto Act, which governs 2.6 million people—I know that Scarborough was once a very small place, but it is now part of the megalopolis, the megacity. Some of us rue the day that that happened, but anyway, the City of Toronto Act deals with everybody, including all the wonderful people in Scarborough and all the wonderful people in Eglinton—Lawrence.

Anyway, this is what this act is about: strengthening government. Government doesn't run by itself. We have to keep fine-tuning it and investing in it to make sure it works for the people of this wonderful province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I think it's important that the government is moving to streamline, look over and do their homework, and to ensure that everything is up to date. As the member from Eglinton—Lawrence just said, we are developing and raising density, so we have to look at everything from sewage to water and how things are run.

We also have to look at new technology. The government has to ensure that everything is as up to date as it possibly can be, in terms of maximizing our use of technology, making things more efficient and making things more transparent. We often hear from this government that they want to provide more transparency. Well, the technology is out there; it's very easy to do. Too often, people say they shouldn't have to file for freedom of information, and that information should be online and easily accessible.

We just heard about a family that was looking for a loved one, and they weren't able to access any personal information because there was no criminal investigation open at that time. We almost have to have a list of what we can do in case of emergencies, because emergencies do happen—people go missing; people get hurt—but we also can have natural disasters. I think we have to look at all our government rules, regulations and legislation, and ensure that everything is set up so that, in case of emergencies and disasters, we are able to deal with problems as efficiently as we can.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm happy to rise today, on behalf of the residents of London—Fanshawe whom I represent.

This bill basically addresses seven schedules, and they've named it Bill 85, the Strengthening and Improving Government Act. There are going to be some things in here, obviously, that we're going to be critiquing, and one of the parts of the bill that we think needs to really be talked about at length and debated, which our critic for health and long-term care pointed out, is schedule 7 with regard to the Ministry of Transportation to communicate with licence holders and regulations for commercial motor vehicles. Basically, it's transporting patients in emergency situations. We've noted that in 2011 the Ombudsman looked at this particular area of the legislation and felt that there are problems with it. There were words in the report such as "inadequate vehicle safety" and things like that.

1620

I look forward to more debate on this and bringing out some of those critiques that hopefully the government across the way will pay attention to, listen to and consider when developing legislation, and when it goes to committee, having even more discussion. It's important that we consider Ontarians', patients' and families' safety first—of utmost importance when we talk about that. So on that part of the bill under schedule 7, we have a lot of critiquing and concerns that we want to share in further debate.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to talk about this.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: It's a pleasure this afternoon to be able to make some comments on Bill 85, An Act to strengthen and improve government by amending or repealing various Acts.

The bill comes from the Attorney General's office. There's a lot in here, as has been mentioned, but there are some key amendments I want to bring out. We're making amendments to the Highway Traffic Act on changing transportation services. The government's taking action to improve the safety and reliability of private sector non-emergency stretcher transportation services in Ontario.

We're making amendments to the Family Law Act. We're making amendments to the Courts of Justice Act. These proposed changes will help to effectively implement new federal family legislation in Ontario.

We're making amendments to the City of Toronto Act. This will help the TTC to expand service to York region and other neighbouring municipalities by adjusting provisions in the act. This will allow for greater transit collaboration between transit agencies across the greater Toronto and Hamilton area.

So there are quite a few areas that we're working on here, but we're trying to clean things up and basically make changes that will make government more efficient and transparent, and work more effectively.

This bill is not that big, but the changes are quite big. We've had opportunities to speak on this bill. I hope that the debate continues and we hear from the opposition as well, so that when this goes to committee, we're able to open it for public deputations and make any changes that may need to be brought; and then, finally, bring it here for final reading and hopefully have it proclaimed by the Lieutenant Governor.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The Minister of Children and Youth Services and minister responsible for women's issues.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I wasn't sure if the opposition was going to weigh in on this. I'm happy to speak to the Strengthening and Improving Government Act.

This sounds very familiar. I think we've talked about it before, and because I've talked about it at length before, I am going to share my time with the member from Scarborough—Guildwood, the Associate Minister of Finance. She can bring some fresh perspective to it and I know will do a great job.

Mr. Mike Colle: And also the Associate Minister of Long-Term Care and Wellness.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Oh, and I hear the Associate Minister of Long-Term Care and Wellness may share some time.

Mr. Mike Colle: And the member from Beaches—East York.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Let's just say it sounds like a number of members will be sharing time with me, including the member from Beaches—East York, who is now in the Legislature.

I remember when I spoke about this before. These are a bunch of small, different measures that will improve the efficiency and responsiveness of government. It is important that we do this. I know that when I first ran as an MPP, some of the goals of this are what I felt were important to me as an MPP, and that is to make government easier to navigate and to be able to access programs and information more readily, because sometimes, quite frankly, governments of all stripes, all levels and jurisdictions can be complicated. So this bill is intended to help with that.

One of the pieces that is very interesting to me—I actually started some of this work when I was the Minister of Consumer Services and working with the then Minister of Transportation—is to amend the Highway Traffic Act to improve the safety and reliability of private sector non-emergency stretcher transportation services in Ontario. People say, "What does that mean?" What that means is that when you see something that looks like an ambulance driving around but it's not really an ambulance—it doesn't have the sirens going; it doesn't have the typical lights going—that's usually what we call a non-emergency stretcher transport service.

This is near and dear to me because my husband, who has been quite ill for the last few years, has had to rely on this kind of service routinely for medical appointments and tests. We wondered, "Who does regulate these

vehicles?” Because they look like an ambulance, but they’re not an ambulance and they’re not governed the same way ambulances are. The people who run these businesses, I think, most often are very reputable, but there has been a lack of standards in these types of vehicles. From a consumer point of view, people would sometimes think they’re getting the same kind of standards as a regular hospital-based ambulance, and that simply is not the case. These are non-emergency stretchers, and they’re operated in a private sector context. So I’m very supportive of those amendments to the Highway Traffic Act.

The other one that I feel very strongly about is the amendments to the Courts of Justice Act to help efficiently implement new federal family legislation and to really recognize that families are no longer defined the way families were traditionally defined, and that different families take many forms. It may include same-sex partners. It may include single persons. My understanding is that these amendments to the Courts of Justice Act will help facilitate the new federal family legislation that’s applicable here in Ontario.

Then, of course, here in the city of Toronto we have amendments to the City of Toronto Act to make it easier for the TTC to expand to York region and other neighbouring municipalities by adjusting provisions of the act. That will give greater collaboration between transit agencies across the GTHA, the greater Toronto and Hamilton area, and that’s very important because—I’m actually the only Toronto member who represents part of Toronto as well as a region outside of Toronto: Durham region. Looking at issues around fare integration and the right kinds of protocols or rules to allow smooth transportation, not just within Toronto but between these other municipalities, is very important, because as you know, Speaker, many people live in York region or Durham but they may work in Toronto. Being able to facilitate these provisions in the act will allow for greater collaboration.

Those are just a few of the notable initiatives. I know there are other ones that are before us in this bill, but I will look forward to the comments from my colleagues and to get their fresh perspective on this, which has been, I’d say, kicking around for a while, so I’m very anxious to see this go forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I recognize the Associate Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I’m very pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 85, the Strengthening and Improving Government Act. This bill includes a number of small but very important measures that will improve the efficiency and the responsiveness of government. The reason we’re looking at this is to ensure that every aspect of government is being looked at. We’re trying to modernize our processes and our systems to streamline and make themeasier to navigate. This is important because we want to meet the needs of Ontarians with these public services that require a very solid foundation.

Today, I want to talk specifically to the components that relate to the Ministry of Labour, the Registered

Human Resources Professionals Act, 2013, where we are adding a new regulation-making authority to list human resources designations, and the designations that are currently listed in the statute are being replaced.

1630

Also I want to talk about the Occupational Health and Safety Act, where we are adding amendments to assist in the adoption of the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals.

I felt that these particular areas were important for us to speak to. Currently, the Registered Human Resources Professionals Act does not contain a regulation-making authority to list human resources designations by regulation. The designations are listed in the act itself. Adding a regulation-making authority and moving the human resources designations—currently listed in a table within the statute—to a regulation provides flexibility in adding and removing designations under the act in the future.

Of course, this is very important because we know that the RHRPA empowers the Human Resources Professionals Association of Ontario to govern and regulate the practice of members of the association and the firms in accordance with the legislation and its laws. Therefore, this is ensuring that they are able to update its professional certification framework to better reflect the role of human resources in the modern workplace.

Certainly as I travel the province talking about the work that we are doing with respect to the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, I often speak to employers about the changing nature of work and the fact that work is changing. Ensuring that we have a professional association for human resources that has the flexibility to make those required changes through regulation is very important for us in order to continue to be flexible and adaptable as our labour market needs continue to change and to expand. I think that while that adjustment seems like a simple thing for us to do, it’s adding an element of flexibility within the labour market which is important.

I also want to talk a little bit about the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the fact that we are making the amendments to assist in the adoption of the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals. The new standards are expected to improve worker health and safety. Employers and workers will have access to a broader range of information about hazardous workplace chemicals, presented in a standardized format considered to be easier to understand than the current labels and safety data sheets.

I believe that this is something that is extremely important for our workplaces. I know that when I worked at Goodwill Industries—I was at Goodwill for over seven years—this was something that we paid particular attention to in terms of the health and safety of our workers. They were handling chemicals that were donated by individuals, and we wanted to ensure that we had a system of standardization so that we could keep our employees safe.

Ensuring that these types of changes and improvements are made is very important in terms of how chem-

icals are handled, that there's consistency in the labelling right across employers and that there is, obviously, training for the workers in that regard.

I want to note that employers are already required to ensure that hazardous workplace chemicals are identified and that safety data sheets for these chemicals are available in the workplace and, of course, that there is safe use, handling and storage as well as disposal of hazardous chemicals. These duties will definitely not change. The main impact is that employers will have to ensure that workers are trained on the appearance and content of new chemical labels and safety in these data sheets. I think this is extremely important.

Before I turn it over to my colleague, I recently had the opportunity to tour the Darlington nuclear facility—I believe you were there as well, Speaker—and we were looking at the refurbishment. I remember, when we were in that particular facility, that there was a significant area devoted to worker health and safety. All of the sheets were posted, everything was laid out, and there was particular emphasis on the role of safety in this facility, which we would all expect. So I think it's that type of standardization and clarity that is needed in our workplaces to ensure that we keep our workers as safe as possible when they are handling chemicals. Safety is number one, as we know, and we want to make sure that, as we make these adjustments to this act, to Bill 85, we keep that top of mind.

I want to thank you for the opportunity to address this bill. I will now hand it off to the member from Beaches—East York.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now recognize the member for Beaches—East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'll be sharing what remaining time we may have with the Associate Minister of Health.

This is one of those pieces of legislation which I find really interesting because it's a piece of legislation that didn't survive in the previous session of this House. The legislation dropped off the order paper as a result of the election that was called for June 12. As a result, in a weird way, it kind of ties me back to a previous session when I wasn't here. I didn't have the pleasure of debating it at the time it was before the House before, but it's here now, and I'm delighted to have it here.

What's interesting is that it went from its old iteration, which was Bill 151, the Strengthening and Improving Government Act, to the current Bill 85. We had an opportunity in the intervening years to make requests of the ministries to see, "What else, then, would you like to come forward with?" So there are a number of new provisions—

Interjection.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you, sir. I'm getting heckled by my own party once again. It's a fascinating process.

Mr. Robert Bailey: You don't deserve decorum.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you. I appreciate that. It's good to have enemies on all sides of the House.

Some of these new provisions are actually extremely important in making sure that this piece of legislation assists the courts and assists processes within the government so that we can move forward and be more efficient.

There are 15 pieces of legislation which are being amended here. So much of it, we see, is in the Courts of Justice Act. I remember listening quite carefully to the member from Bramalea—Gore—Malton as he spoke at length about the things that were not in the bill and as he was explaining that these are things that should also be in the bill. Maybe those things will come into the next iteration of the bill. We might call it the Strengthening and Improving Government bill 2, or "son of," or something to that effect. Those are interesting amendments that he was proposing that, of course, wouldn't be accepted at committee because they don't form part of the current bill. Notwithstanding, there are a number of very important issues here.

Many of you know that my father was a Supreme Court of Ontario judge.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Joe Potts.

Mr. Arthur Potts: That's absolutely the fact.

Interjection.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thanks; I appreciate that.

He used to come home so often frustrated, and I'd listen to him. He'd complain and say, "I know exactly what I want to do here but the law is getting in my way." He would have suggestions. He would have suggestions to the Chief Justice that he'd hope would filter back to the Attorney General about subtle changes and additions and deletions in certain statutes so that he could effect what he saw as natural justice when the act in itself was getting in his way. This was extremely important.

We've had that opportunity, through consultations with all the various stakeholders in the courts system, to ensure that there could be significant changes to a number of the Ministry of the Attorney General bills. New changes to the Courts of Justice Act will remove the requirement of the Attorney General's approval of the appointment of case managers after the age of 65. It will clarify timelines that will apply to deputy judges to complete their decisions.

One of my dad's great friends, Bob Sutherland, who was on the court with him at the same time, had a terrible habit of reserving judgments *ad nauseam*. Dad was really good because he wanted to make sure that good justice would be swift justice. He tended to give oral decisions on all his cases; that made them less likely to be appealed because you didn't have exhaustive reasons where smart lawyers could find *picayune* details that they would try to overturn your judgments with. But more importantly, he saw it in the interest of justice that he would get the court decision in front of people so they could move on with their lives.

1640

Our good friend Bob Sutherland was far more erudite, and he would spend endless weeks and months in trying to get the decision so he was absolutely certain that he had the law precisely as it was spelled out. It was a

different approach in how you administer justice in the province. I believe that some of these amendments will give judges more authority to move more quickly in their decision-making. It directs clarified timelines for deputy judges to come forward with their decisions. That would be extremely important.

In the few minutes remaining to me, I think I will turn this over to a great colleague, the Associate Minister of Health, who I'm sure has some very interesting aspects to bring to this bill as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I'm absolutely delighted to follow the debate of my colleagues, the Associate Minister of Finance and the MPP for Beaches—East York.

I'm really looking forward, in the short time that I have, to speaking to this bill, which is the Strengthening and Improving Government Act. As the name suggests, Mr. Speaker, it really is about doing all the little things we need to do to make life easier for Ontarians, a bit like housekeeping.

The importance of this is underscored by something that happened in my riding yesterday, which was that I held a town hall, and it was a very successful town hall. I had Minister Orazietti come. The discussion there was updating the Condominium Act. I had 150 people there. You could tell how important it was for those Ontarians, for my constituents, to see us updating legislation.

This really is in that spirit. Just as we have updated and modernized the Condominium Act, which was last updated in 1998; since then, 20 years later, we've had to update that. I saw with my own eyes yesterday—we had 150 people there—the enthusiasm and the hunger there was for this modernization. It's the same thing with this, when we go forward and strengthen and improve the government.

Mr. Mike Colle: Where in Mississauga did you have it?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I had the meeting at the Living Arts Centre, right in the heart of Mississauga East—Cooksville, the beautiful Living Arts Centre. If you haven't been to it, I really think you should go. I'm sure that Minister Orazietti would give rave reviews.

There is another thing that Minister Orazietti learned yesterday about my riding, and that is the fact that I actually have a lot of condos. When people think about Mississauga, they think it's suburbia, and yesterday he was, like, "Now I know why you have been asking me to modernize the legislation." This is in the same spirit of modernizing and strengthening the government. What it's going to do is strengthening and improving in such a way that includes a number of small but important measures that will improve the efficiency and responsiveness of government.

We're looking at many, many aspects of government, and I know that my colleague spoke at length to some of those specific issues. All I'm trying to do here today is speak to the importance: why we need to do it. It's a bit like spring cleaning; well, in this case more like fall

cleaning. But we all need to clean our closets, update them. This is what it is. It's a good housekeeping bill. It's going to make our lives—Ontarians' lives—better, and I look forward to all-party support for it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Harris: You know what? I'll chime in for a few minutes on this one. It was interesting how the member across the way talked about a little housekeeping. I know that one item in the bill pertains to the Highway Traffic Act, and I couldn't help but bring it up. Obviously, Bill 31 is an important bill, but in committee we tried to strengthen that bill by putting forward a series of amendments that stakeholders had brought forward. There was an amendment brought forward by my colleague from Thornhill on road incident management when an accident occurs. I know it's in committee now, and we look forward of getting it out of committee.

To everyone's astonishment, the government members voted out a section of their own bill, as it pertains to Bill 31. What they've done with this omnibus bill is actually include that clause back into the bill. So "housekeeping" is perhaps one word to explain it. It's just a bill they've corrected their mistakes with. I mean, where can we go with that?

But, you know, over the last 12 years—I know they're coming up to an anniversary. We'll be reminded of a lot of different pieces of legislation that come before the House, of course this one being omnibus in nature.

I couldn't help but speak to the fact that in committee for Bill 31, not one of our amendments actually passed, everything from "slow down and move over" for highway vehicles clearing snow—we hear about left-lane hogs. BC has moved forward with that. We put that forward as an amendment, something that they turned down as well. My colleague from Thornhill put something forward. John Yakabuski from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke put forward a bill about snow on the top of a vehicle coming off.

So this omnibus bill is basically correcting their mistakes, in essence.

Thank you, Speaker, for my two minutes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Algoma—Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's always an honour and a privilege to stand here on behalf of the good people of Algoma—Manitoulin. I'm looking forward to heading back home to my riding at the end of today's session, around 6 o'clock, but in the meantime, we have this wonderful opportunity to talk about Bill 85, the Strengthening and Improving Government Act.

I was looking at the act and I was looking at all of the various schedules that are in there, thinking that most of this is just general housecleaning. I'm not sure why we have to do this extensive debate about a title that really isn't doing what it's supposed to do.

You're seeing a perfect example of speed debate that is coming from my colleagues across the way. Everybody has got to chime in for that two or three minutes under

this bill—in all due fairness, not being really effective and talking about the contents of the bill.

I have a new title for the bill: the “Let’s change the drapes so we can talk about housecleaning to Ontarians act.” That’s what we could be calling it as well, because we’re really just doing some housecleaning that could be done instead of wasting our time talking about this.

There is one schedule that I do want to talk about. There is schedule 1, which will require some extensive discussions on it, and I look forward to this going into committee and having a discussion, and schedules 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.

The one that concerns me is schedule 7. It’s a question that we have, actually, for this government in regards to an answer that has not yet been provided: Who ultimately will be responsible for ensuring that the stretcher transportation services are safe and provide quality transportation for vulnerable Ontarians? We have not heard that answer yet. We have not heard any debate from across the way in regards to what is happening. We have not received any details. There is no complaint mechanism that would be there for the patients.

If we’re going to talk about something, let’s focus on those discussions so we can actually get some material while we’re discussing this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Michael Coteau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak today on this great piece of legislation.

I just want to take my two minutes to talk a bit about the piece of legislation that will update the way in which the College of Trades works here in the province of Ontario. I think it’s important to have good legislation that allows the different colleges and different organizations that work to help our different sectors within the province of Ontario—in particular, I think it’s important to recognize the work that the trades do here in Ontario.

I know that we have a lot of young people who decide to go into trades as a career choice. These types of decisions are great because they pay well and provide young people with a lot of experience. I’ve been told in the past that there has always been a challenge keeping up with the numbers, the demands that are out there in Ontario for people to work in the trades.

I remember meeting some young people who were getting into the trades, going through apprenticeship programs like the Hammer Heads. I remember down at the athletes’ village, during its construction, getting to meet a lot of young people who worked on those projects. I remember this young man telling me that he was able to save some money and get a down payment for a house. He was in his early twenties. He thanked the trades because of that.

I think it’s important to have the type of legislation that’s out there that allows the different colleges and, again, different sector-based organizations to have the type of structure needed to be successful so young people

and those who decide to go into the trades continue to have those opportunities here in this great province.

1650

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I’m just going to use my two minutes, because I’m going to be giving some more comments afterwards. As the rookie of this corner of the House, it’s interesting to me—not just sometimes what we’re debating and what we’re focusing on, but the whole protocol and how things get done. I would have thought that it would be much more practical for the government to find a way—maybe that could be something that could be implemented in a future private member’s bill, so that if it is just housekeeping and it is just modernizing previous regulations, we don’t have to do it this way.

Maybe there is a better way. Maybe we can all read through it and just have our written comments. Maybe there are electronic debating systems, much like the way Elizabeth May participated in the debate on Twitter. Maybe we can have discussions electronically by writing in, and then it’s on the record.

But I think that there are much more important things that we could be debating in the House. It is a little bit comical, in a way, to hear the members from the government side of the House speaking as if somehow we’re saving the province.

The Fraser Institute is coming out very harshly against this government in terms of Ontario moving further into being a have-not province, with high unemployment. We used to have the lowest unemployment, with salaries higher than the rest of Canada in many sectors, and we’re just not seeing that kind of level of growth, improvement, investment and excitement.

We need to see excitement in the business sector the way we’re seeing it now with the Blue Jays, that people are just so happy to hear about all the businesses that are coming to the province and being developed, and all the innovations and improvements and people being hired and trained. That, I think, is what we should be focusing on, not just having all these discussions—which I’m going to be sharing some more comments on—on housekeeping bills.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the government side. The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: It gives me great pleasure to respond to the comments from the members from Kitchener–Conestoga, Algoma–Manitoulin and Thornhill, and, of course, our own Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

I get the sense that on the other side of the House they want to have it both ways: “It’s a big omnibus bill” and “Oh, it’s just a bunch of housecleaning items. There must be a better process.” I have more respect for the bill-making democratic process than I’m hearing from the member from Thornhill. This is what this House is for.

I think that’s what the member from Manitoulin, in his own frivolous comment that this changing the drapes—I

hope that when he goes home tonight—I know he's looking forward to being back in Manitoulin, and I envy him, because I was up in Manitoulin; it's an incredible place to be. But I hope that when he goes back, he'll help out around the house and do some of the necessary housecleaning.

Yes, it's absolutely true that this piece of legislation does correct some of the oversights, or the experience that we've gained over time with pieces of legislation like Bill 14, so it is important that we do make the government better by getting the housecleaning items right and correcting areas where we have seen that there has been change.

The Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport spoke at great length about the trades, and he's absolutely right about how important the College of Trades is to regulating and making sure that young people have an opportunity to get back. There will be opportunities within this act which will make that operation run a lot smoother.

What I am hearing from the other side is that there is pretty much a unanimous agreement that we need to move forward. These are useful changes, and what I am hearing is pretty widespread support for fast-tracking this thing, getting it out of this House at this level of the debate so that we do get it to committee, and if there are some additional tweaks that we can make—some of the amendments that we are proposing—then we can have that fulsome conversation there, hear from the people of Ontario and make this a better bill to make this a better province to live in.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm happy to rise to speak on Bill 85, the Strengthening and Improving Government Act, An Act to strengthen and improve government by amending or repealing various Acts.

We've heard a lot. We've heard it called an omnibus bill because it is so in-depth. The acts that are affected include the Courts of Justice Act, Family Law Act, Provincial Offences Act, Vital Statistics Act, Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act—that one scares me a bit—Employment Standards Act, Occupational Health and Safety Act, Registered Human Resources Professionals Act, City of Brantford Act, City of Hamilton Act, City of Toronto Act, Municipal Act, Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act, Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Act, and, of course, the Highway Traffic Act.

We do have to do housekeeping every now and then, and I understand that. I'm not questioning the protocol or how things work. I'm still learning how the bills proceed through all the different levels of committee and debate. But once we're doing a bill like this, which really is, in a way, an all-encompassing, omnibus type of bill, why wouldn't we do more?

For example, we're seeing so many cuts to health care. Why aren't we streamlining the health care process? We're seeing cuts to the front-line services of health care while demand is rising, the population is rising, the

percentage of seniors in the province is rising. As well, something that we don't really think about often is, the number of treatments that we can provide and the prolongation of people's lives also add to the cost of health care. Ontario is lagging behind in terms of approving new medications that it will cover.

So once we're having an omnibus bill, why can't we address so many of the problems that this side of the House is often bringing to the attention of the government?

We just heard from my colleague that we have proposed amendments to make our roads safer and those amendments weren't put in the Highway Traffic Act. Now we're reopening it and making some changes to the Highway Traffic Act. Why aren't these changes being made? He mentioned "look first and move over," snow piling on the roofs of cars and, of course, my private member's bill, which is saying that we need to address better incident management on our highways.

So it's not just about modernizing our legislation, it's not just about strengthening, it's not just about house-keeping; it's about making life better for everybody in Ontario, ensuring that, as much as possible, people are comfortable, people are safe and people are getting a good education, a good quality of life, value for their taxes. I think that's where we're lagging here in Ontario. I think that we are collecting higher and higher revenue every year—and I certainly hear the frustration. All you have to do is go on social media today and do #carenotcuts. The doctors are very concerned. It isn't just about the delivery of health care services for people who are just going to see the doctor for perhaps an annual checkup and usually get good news; it's about people who are having an emergency—and we're seeing longer wait times, again, in emergency rooms across the province. We're seeing hospitals being built when there isn't a budget to maintain the hospital, when there isn't a budget to staff the hospital and when there isn't a budget to equip the hospital. So I think it's a little frustrating. And I apologize if I sound a bit frustrated, but I think that we can certainly do more to make things better in this province.

I want to talk a little bit about what we heard earlier today about a family. Two parents were here whose son went missing and couldn't be found. The reality is that we can't always do everything for everybody. It's just not feasible. We have limited funds in the province. But more can be done, and certainly more can be done when we consider the technology that we have now. Most people have smart phones with them, and there are tracking devices that can be used. Cars have GPS systems. Too often, after the fact, we're very slow to make the changes that are necessary. There's the Amber Alert system for a missing child, but perhaps we need to do more for missing adults, missing special-needs people, who perhaps are suffering from dementia or having mental health challenges.

1700

We live in Canada, where it's a cold climate. It's a serious problem if somebody goes missing in the winter.

I think that we can certainly look at that technology and say to ourselves, if something like Uber can be developed, where we can see how far away an Uber car is from us if we have the app, perhaps if we have people with special-needs concerns, they could have some kind of bracelet, some kind of tracking device—maybe it's something they wouldn't even know about, but that's a discussion for privacy—a chip in an earring or something like that. There are things that we could be doing as legislators to look at that technology. What could we be doing to make things safer?

We go travelling, many of us, and I'm sure that we have noticed that other countries are investing in things like smart traffic signals, where they're able to absolutely assess the traffic demands in different directions and adjust the lights accordingly. This makes things much safer. Some of them even have flashing lights to tell you, when the light turns green, how fast you should go so that right when you get to the next intersection, the light is just turning green. It means people aren't going to speed, we're going to have less pollution, we're going to have fewer accidents, and it would just be safer for everybody.

Even on the Gardiner Expressway, it's very narrow and not well-lit, and we live in a city that is often very foggy. The Don Valley Parkway can be very foggy. We're not investing in things like better lighting, on the guardrails. We have money for the Pan Am Games. We have money for all kinds of celebrations in this province. I think that what we are lacking is in prioritizing and ensuring that things are safer.

We have to have those adult discussions, and when we're doing these kinds of changes to acts, it's unfortunate that politics oftentimes get in the way. We do often work well together when there are children in need, seniors in need, when there's a health care crisis; we are able to sit down, have those discussions and see what can be done to improve the lives of everybody in this province. So I'm really hopeful that going forward, when we're doing this type of an omnibus bill, we can have maybe more input from all the different critics, from everybody in the House, more of, "Well, we're doing an omnibus bill. Let's put everything of what we can make improvements to on the table."

It really is unfortunate that when we go through committee, we go through the amendment stage and amendments are proposed where stakeholders—even for my private member's bill, every stakeholder that came to the committee and gave a deputation was in support. Yet we don't see that bill being brought into the House. We don't see amendments where there's stakeholder support. We don't see those amendments being put into the final piece of legislation, and that's not what the public is paying us for—because that's who's paying us.

Some of us actually may have heard this: Jim Richards on CFRB interviewed a teacher yesterday. This teacher was unable to accept that the taxpayers are paying her salary. Maybe that's something that we have to all remind ourselves of in here: that the taxpayers aren't just

paying our salaries; the taxpayers are giving us their money to make the province healthier and stronger.

We're not seeing a healthier and stronger province. It's been 12 years of this government, and instead of seeing less debt, we're seeing more debt. Instead of seeing lower unemployment, we're still seeing high unemployment. Instead of seeing a better health care system, we are hearing from everybody who has to access the health care system, including everybody who works in the health care system, that the health care system is worse than it was. We have an education system where a teacher goes on the radio and doesn't know who's paying her salary. We have an education system with some of the lower math scores. We're having constant strife with the teachers. We have, I think, some of the best-paid teachers in the world, and instead of being happy, they're still not happy because of their treatment by this government. How is that possible, that we have such a fantastic province in such a wonderful country, and yet our teachers are unhappy?

We're hearing from many of the trades that they're not happy with many of the new rules and regulations, and they feel that they have to have licensing fees. Even if they're a hairdresser, all of a sudden they're being told to have licensing fees—or a gardener or a landscaper has to have licensing fees. They feel like they are literally being taxed to death and they're paying taxes on their taxes.

I think that maybe we could take some time and remind ourselves that we are not here to spend our money; we are here to spend the public's money. We have to spend it wisely, we have to spend it carefully and we have to prioritize, and we have to think, on every single dollar that we spend, could it be better used somewhere else? Obviously we're seeing the revenues go up, and yet the quality of life goes down, so I think that we have to think more like a business. If a business has to stay competitive and wants to stay in business in this world, they have to constantly be improving.

Yes, this is an omnibus bill, and it's to improve many previous pieces of legislation. That's great, but it can't just stop there. We have to continue and we have to look at everything about the way governments are run and the way decisions are made.

We heard earlier today discussions about people whose salaries went up 10 times once they got a nice plum government appointment. You have to wonder—not whether a CEO should be paid \$1 million, \$2 million, \$3 million or \$4 million; we had differing opinions on that. But the question should be, what value we are getting for that salary? What is this person providing the province of Ontario and the taxpayers of Ontario to warrant that kind of salary?

There are neurosurgeons operating on motor vehicle accidents, where they're called in in the dead of night to rush into the hospital. My husband is an eye surgeon, and luckily we don't see too many emergencies in the middle of the night, but there are always a few every year. Imagine being woken up from your sleep at 2 o'clock in the morning, getting into your car, driving to the hospital and having to operate on somebody.

These doctors have to pay their overhead and their staff. They are treated like government employees when it suits the government, and they are treated as small business owners when it suits the government as well. I think that we have to really have that adult discussion, and we have to say, "These are the people who are there for us when we need help." The firefighters, the first responders, police officers, RCMP officers, doctors, health care workers, nurse practitioners—they are there when we need them, and we have to make them feel valued.

I think that that's really the problem here. The teachers, even though we have probably the highest-paid teachers in North America, or possibly the world, don't feel valued. Our doctors aren't feeling valued. And the taxpayers of the province aren't feeling valued; they feel they're being ripped off. They feel that their expenses are going up. They're paying higher electricity costs, they're paying gas tax at the pump and they see that their infrastructure is still crumbling. They're being told, "It's because you're not paying enough," and they wonder where their gas tax is going to. They're going to the hospital emergency room and waiting for hours longer than they expected, and they're being told, "Yes, this present government brought in a health tax." Where did that money go?

We have a system now where we're beyond paper. We're really beyond paper, and now we're seeing some of my colleagues trying out new technology—tablets instead of paper. I think that's where we're all going to be moving here in the Legislature. Well, that technology is out there, and there's no reason why the public, with their money that they pay in taxes, can't see where the money is going.

Even on the flip side, it would be of benefit to the government if people could see the money that is being spent on them. I think I'm not alone here in hearing from constituents, "Well, I paid my taxes and I deserve." I think we've all heard that plenty in—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member for London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: On a point of order, Speaker: I would like to mention that we don't have quorum right now.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Would the Clerk please check that we have quorum?

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Trevor Day): A quorum is present, Speaker.

1710

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Carry on.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

As I was mentioning, some of the members in the House are now trying out tablets instead of all the paper. That would be much more environmental and of a lot of benefit to many of us here. I think that with all the new technologies it's possible that the taxpayers could also see what value they're getting for their taxes. There's no

reason why they shouldn't be able to look online and put in their health card number and see for each year what they have been—I wouldn't say costing their health care system, but what value they got for the taxes they paid. Because too often people feel, "Well, I pay \$20,000 a year in taxes, so I deserve back." Well, that calculation could be easily made, Mr. Speaker. If you start working at the age of 20 and you pay taxes until you're 65 or 67, and you live to be 100—or these days we're seeing past 100—it's very simple arithmetic. It's not limitless.

We want to provide fantastic state-of-the-art health care for everybody in the province from the day they're born until the day they pass on, but it costs. I think that people will think twice before they're pushing for some kind of new project in their neighbourhood. A lot of people thought we should put in a bid for the Olympics right after we did the Pan Am Games, and that was a lot of money. I think that people will think twice before they're pushing for these kinds of projects, if they really genuinely understand where the money is all going. The problem is that they don't. And the reason they don't is because we don't. We can't tell them if we don't ourselves know. If the money is just going from the gas station into general coffers, then they're not able to really understand and really see and really feel that they're getting value. So, Mr. Speaker, I think that it's great that we're doing housekeeping. We're hearing from all parties in the House. There are no issues with anything very specific in terms of amending and improving.

One of the things that's up for discussion is having the transit systems be able to be more integrated by the different regions, because the city of Toronto isn't just the city of Toronto anymore; it's the GTA and Hamilton. There have been discussions for years about having more of a conglomerate of transit systems, and it's really time that we do that, that we create a one-fare system. It doesn't mean it's one fare, because I don't think that you can go from Newmarket to downtown Toronto for the same fare that you go from Lawrence to Bloor, but maybe we have to look at what's being done elsewhere. Too often this government is trying to reinvent the wheel, and all they have to do is look at what other cities are doing. They have different zone systems, and if you're going through different zones, then you just pay a bit extra. But right now, where I am in York region, if people have to travel by public transit, they have to pay two fares: They pay a York region fare and they pay a Toronto fare. They figure it's cheaper to drive a car, and too often that's the case.

We saw this government try to implement an electronic health care system. They spent over a billion dollars and achieved absolutely nothing. They claimed for years that they had a diabetes registry, but they didn't even have the diabetes registry. I implemented health care systems in a medical practice, and all I can say is that I asked other doctors what system they put in and how it was, and that's how I made my decision. Alberta was one of the top in the country in terms of electronic health care systems. Why this government didn't just go

to our neighbours down the road and ask them in Alberta how much it would cost us to purchase their system and pay them to implement their system in Ontario and train us in Ontario—and I can assure you that I would be very surprised if it would have been more than 10% of the billion dollars we spent on electronic health care.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's a pleasure to be here tonight and listen to the debate from the member from Thornhill. But what I kind of observed was that she talked a lot about things that really weren't in the bill. But they were very interesting. Probably she's feeling the same challenge as we are, that this bill really should be changed under regulations as opposed to being debated in the House.

She made some good points about the state of Ontario and how we aren't spending taxpayers' dollars wisely. We see a lot of waste from this government. We see a lot of scandal from this government. She talked about that.

She talked about that we need to make sure that when we're bringing legislation to this House, it is something that we can actually change here. The schedules that are in this bill—there are seven schedules. Over the seven schedules, it touches five ministries, and many members have spoken up and said that this is not the place where we really need to be taking time and debating an omnibus bill that could have been put in the budget. There was an opportunity to do that. The government chose not to do that, and now they're bringing it forward.

Though I have to say it is an omnibus bill and things could be done by regulation, I'm always encouraged and eager to debate any issue in this House, whichever member has put forward, so that we can talk it out and offer suggestions. I'll be doing that in my next two-minute hits because, Speaker, the Ombudsman did a wonderful report on a portion of this bill, on schedule 7, which they describe as stretcher transportation services—very impressive. It feels like an Auditor General report, actually, what he touched on. More and more, we're seeing the Auditor General do analyses and audits on the ministries, and coming up with inefficiencies and inadequacies that are happening that we can improve upon.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thanks very much. The member for Scarborough Southwest.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I appreciate this opportunity to have two minutes to make some comments on the speech or the presentation from the member from Thornhill. I listened very carefully to what she had to say, and of course she made many good points about things that need to be taken care of by this government.

This government has been in power here since 2003. When you look at things—the improvements since then and now—we've increased or improved health care significantly. Wait times are down in all sorts of surgeries: cataract surgeries and so on. The education system has improved in so many ways. We're not calling nurses "hula hoops." We are having issues and challenges with the education system, but we are working things out. There are less and less strikes happening.

The health care system: I hear it from doctors, I hear it from specialists and I hear it from people in my riding of Scarborough Southwest that the health care system has gotten so much better. You don't have to wait so long to get cataract surgery. These are some of the things that I want to mention. There's so much more to say about what our government has done.

But pertaining to this bill, basically it's called An Act to strengthen and improve government by amending or repealing various Acts. What we're doing is, we're amending and repealing acts so that we can modernize things.

Ten years ago, 15 years ago, we didn't have Google, we didn't have Yahoo, we didn't have Facebook, we didn't have—

Interjection.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Five years ago, we didn't have Twitter.

People nowadays are using electronic devices, and in parts of this bill we're allowing for people to file documents electronically and so on. There's so much to talk about, but in my two minutes I just wanted to move those points forward, and I hope that through this debate we'll hear some more.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to stand and respond to the member from Thornhill. I've listened to a lot of debate this afternoon. My head's kind of swimming with all—

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes. The minister or the deputy House leader's going to see if he can get me a question for next week, so we're going to work on that together. Maybe I'll ask a question from your side of the House if I can't get one over here.

Anyway, the member touched on a number of different issues. I looked through Bill 85 and there are at least seven different ministries that are affected by this bill, if it goes through, which it probably will. I'm very interested in all the different comments on it.

One member over there talked about that we didn't have Google, we didn't have Twitter and we didn't have all the social media. I'm thinking that maybe that wasn't such a bad thing when we didn't have all this different Twitter and social media. I find myself on it more than I should be. I think maybe we all spend too much time on it. Probably we could do a lot more one-on-one if we didn't have all of this social media.

1720

Certainly, there are a number of areas that do need to be strengthened, do need to be improved in legislation as time goes on and things change. So I look forward to the rest of the debate and we'll see where this bill takes us. I'm sure there are lots of other comments that people want to make here in the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to stand in this House, even on a Thursday afternoon.

I'd like to make a few comments on the member from Thornhill and her speech. I was listening in the back room, on the TV. I think, to condense, what I got from her speech is that this bill is kind of like a book with a great cover, but one of those books that, when you read through it, you wonder where they got the title: An Act to strengthen and improve government by amending or repealing various Acts.

Strengthening government: You're expecting something with a bit more meat. That's not to say—there are lots of things in here that should be done, could be done, but there are lots of things that we could talk about, about strengthening and improving government, that would be a more worthwhile debate.

Having said that, there are a few things in here, and one I'd like to touch on is the part about non-emergency patient transport. It's something that should be better regulated, but I'd like to make mention that in large parts of the province it doesn't exist. In my part of the province, ambulances do the non-emergency transport, so people who need to be moved from a hospital to a nursing home often have to wait hours and hours, and hours and hours, and I think that's something that has also got to be addressed.

We had a pilot project in our region, and the pilot project is no longer there and there is no more non-emergency transport. So while it's great to regulate it, and we fully approve, it would be a big improvement if it was actually available to the vast—hopefully to all Ontarians, because it's a needed service.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the member for Thornhill. You have two minutes for a response.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Thank you to the members from London—Fanshawe, Scarborough Southwest, Sarnia—Lambton and Timiskaming—Cochrane for their comments.

The last speaker just mentioned non-emergency transportation. Well, you know what? A lot of times it's not just about salaries, as we see with health care workers and with teachers. A lot of times there are things that the government can offer in terms of changing the rules and regulations that would make them just as happy as or maybe even happier than if we increased their salary, and then that makes the taxpayers and the voters happier because we're not spending more of their money.

One of the things, including non-emergency transfer of patients, is that so often doctors are at one hospital waiting for a patient who is at another hospital to come and see them at the hospital where they're working, because it's so specialized now, medical care, and that patient is not arriving. Why aren't they arriving? Well, they have no way to get there. They are waiting for their brother-in-law to come pick them up.

As somebody who is in a health care type of family, I can tell you there have been all kinds of bizarre circumstances where a patient walks out of, say, Southlake

Regional and they need to go to Mackenzie Health and it's a half-hour drive and the doctor is waiting two hours, not getting paid, because doctors only get paid fee-for-service. In those types of circumstances, they are not. They're on call and they are waiting for a patient to come and expecting them to come in half an hour. They drive to the hospital, they're waiting for that patient to come, and if that patient decides, because somebody has to be dropped off at home, which is an hour away, on the way to the hospital, because that family only has one car, or they have to pick up a kid from daycare—the doctor is left waiting, and that's not a good use of doctors' time.

So I think that more can be done to streamline and to consider the difficulties that our health care professionals face.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Here we are on Thursday, 25 after 5, and, you know, we have this privileged position to speak to legislation in this House. We have Bill 85, the Strengthening and Improving Government Act, 2015, before us, which builds on the former piece of legislation under—I think it was Bill 151, the first iteration. You have to say, for the love of humanity, really? If this bill did strengthen and improve government, I would be very happy. I would be almost ecstatic. However, in the interests of speaking to some substantive issues that are affecting people in this province, I will be focusing most of my comments on schedule 7 of Bill 85, which is stretcher transportation services.

I think it is worth noting, Mr. Speaker, that these are largely housekeeping measures, necessary because of certain events, like tribunal rulings and so on, which render existing legislation obsolete. It's really interesting because we've seen this tendency in the way that the Liberal government crafts legislation, that it's over-arching and has broad strokes about it, and then leaves a lot of the legislation up to the regulation side, which they can adapt and change as they see fit—which they could do with a number of issues and with a number of schedules that are contained within Bill 85. They could do most of what's contained within this bill through regulation. In fact, they should have done it a long time ago, especially on schedule 7, which is the stretcher transportation services. So this is not a substantive piece of legislation, but it does have a really good title. I mean, full marks for the title. But it's obviously compelled through regulatory changes and could be accomplished largely through regulation, as I've already pointed out.

If you're thinking about what people care about, and if people are actually paying attention to what we're doing here in this House and if they are concerned about non-emergency transport services for medically stable patients, which schedule 7 largely deals with, then they may be interested to know that we've always believed that stretcher transportation services must be regulated and should be regulated to protect patients and their families. It's a little bit of the Wild West out there with some of these transportation services. While people may

be medically stable, they might not be so stable at the end of their drive to the hospital. There are a lot of people who rely on these services, and so regulation actually is very important to ensure patient safety. The regulation piece is completely and utterly long overdue.

I think people would generally be surprised to find out that the transport of medically stable patients to a medical institution, to a doctor's office or to a clinic for a transfusion or for treatment around diabetes—that right now in the province of Ontario those transportation services are currently unregulated. There are no safety and quality regulations and no accountability on this front. That leaves patients and their families with no certainty that they will get the proper care they need, no quality assurance and no limit on the costs, and no complaints mechanism.

Why are we here, on the first day of October 2015, four years after the promise that this issue would be dealt with? That's a rational question to be asking. Patients and their families obviously deserve better from this government, and there's a track record here in the health portfolio which actually is not a very good track record. When you look at the Ornge ambulance scandal that we have not fully recovered from—and I think there's still an investigation going on—patients and their families deserve better from this government. Unfortunately, these regulations have not been enacted. But they could be, right now.

In June 2011, more than four years ago, the government first announced its intention to set quality and safety standards for stretcher transportation services. I wasn't here in 2011, but it seems to me that that was pretty much in the heat of the Ornge air ambulance issue. At the time, the government said, "At the earliest opportunity, the government plans to introduce legislation that would, if passed, regulate the industry by setting core standards and requirements on transporting passengers between health care facilities in non-emergency situations."

1730

Here we are, four years later, and those standards still do not exist. We have to ask, what is going on? This is something that can be done right now. The Minister of Health is a new Minister of Health in that portfolio, but the past Minister of Health could have taken action on this issue. There's no excuse.

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's not worth heckling for. It's inexcusable. These are obviously people who are vulnerable, regardless of whether they're in the north or the south or the east, or right here in a major urban centre.

It actually reminds me: When I was thinking about the whole issue of transporting patients, when I think back around Ornge—do you remember, Mr. Speaker, that there was the issue that the air ambulances were designed in such a way that the paramedics didn't have enough room to perform CPR? This was one of the issues that

came out. The Auditor General and the Ombudsman at the time highlighted this as a serious issue.

There's a need for regulation. That's my point: There's a need for regulation. The people who are calling on these unregulated transportation services need to have some assurance that the person who is picking them up is a qualified driver, is not someone who would be taking advantage of those people—because obviously, some sort of a reference check, you would assume, would have taken place—and that those people are reliable.

Note also that there are no restrictions around costs. There's no benchmark for what that transportation should cost. I'm just speaking the truth here. It doesn't exist right now. There's no benchmark for the cost. There's no costing out. There's no accountability on this kind of a service. So you have to wonder, how could this happen?

Schedule 7 obviously falls far short of setting real standards for stretcher transportation services. This is part of the Highway Traffic Act; part of that actually is repealed. This part currently allows municipalities to pass bylaws and set standards for the operation of medical transportation services, as defined by the minister of the day.

Clearly, where we are right now with this service, having no standards, as pointed out, is not sufficient. They're not the clear and transparent regulations that are needed to protect patients. This is simply a legal mechanism to allow the government to regulate medical transportation services as commercial motor vehicles.

Why would this not actually have taken place four years ago? This is a well-known issue. I know that I deal with this issue in my riding. I know that the northern members' constituents will reach out to their MPP's office looking for assistance, looking for guidance and often asking very tough questions. I think it's safe to say that there are some outstanding issues in this regard. I don't understand how the government could not say—they can actually do it right now. They don't need this legislation.

As I said, families and patients deserve far better than a convoluted, unclear, unaccountable and vague promise to make sure that hospitals follow guidelines, and to regulate stretcher transportation services as commercial vehicles. To us on this side of the House, the need for transparency is very clear: to protect vulnerable patients who need non-urgent transportation to get to hospital, to get to medical appointments and then, also, to get back home again. That's what Ontarians expect, and quite honestly, I think that's what they deserve. Four years after the government first promised the act, the measures of this bill fall far short; they do. Obviously, there are also no details in this bill about the regulations and guidelines being imposed on stretcher transportation services, providers, hospitals and LHINs.

I think the Auditor General's report that came out last week, Mr. Speaker—on page 15 of that report, I think you'll remember that it was astounding for us to see it in black and white. We always suspected this, but there has never been any thorough value-for-money assessment

around funding that goes into the CCAC system and its impact on patient results. That's astounding, Mr. Speaker. Quite honestly, it's shocking for people in this House, but as we rolled out some of that information, we found that people out there in the community who have actually had to try to navigate one of the most complex and layered health care systems anywhere in Canada were astounded to know that when money was being directed towards CCACs, there was very little accountability on how that money was spent. The figure that the Auditor General quoted was that only 61% of that funding was going to direct care. The question remains: What's happening with the rest of the money? Second, how are we going to find out that that 61% actually making it to patient care is, in fact, positively impacting the lives of patients?

You can't discount the Auditor General. She's non-partisan. She's an independent officer of this Legislature. That review was five years coming. We were waiting five years for that report.

We've heard anecdotally across the province—all of us have—about this issue. There's a great disparity in the level of services. I will say publicly that those CCACs across the province are not created equally. Some CCACs actually had been doing a very good job of doing some internal reviews. But when you're just looking at your own world and not comparing it to the evidence that exists out there on how to positively impact and get what I would describe as probably the best bang for the buck, if you will, around prevention and early intervention and all of those issues that actually would ensure that those dollars are being spent responsibly, with the patient first in mind—we hear a lot about “patient first.” For the Auditor General to come out and say that this kind of assessment and analysis has never been done was shocking for us.

I look forward to seeing what's going to happen with that report. It's not all critique on this side. We now have the Auditor General's report, and now you have a responsibility to do something with it.

Interjections.

Ms. Catherine Fife: You do. You do have a responsibility to do something with it.

Back to ambulatory care—and of course this issue did come up at AMO. This was a very interesting year at AMO. The municipalities, I think, are getting to that tipping point of frustration around the relationship between the province and the municipalities. I think that they are looking for some clear guidelines. At least tell them the rules of engagement on everything, really, from transportation to housing—and then the fallout around health care, because health care affects everything. Then you backtrack all the way back to finance. When you follow the money in this place, you find out the real priorities. I think that's the way it works, and people generally do understand that.

The critiques, though, around this bill I've already outlined, around stretcher transportation services not

having those benchmarks, not having those standards. Why has it taken so long? Those are all valid questions, I think. But there are no details in this bill about those regulations and guidelines being imposed on stretcher transportation service providers. Basically, you've brought a piece of legislation to the floor of the Legislature and you've said that all of these things need to happen, but you haven't necessarily said how or why they should, which I think is an important piece of the conversation.

Not having a complaint mechanism for patients and families: I think this is really important. This came out in the spring, when we were looking for Ombudsman overview of the MUSH sector. You remember this: the MUSH sector. Municipalities now have an ombudsman, universities now have an ombudsman and school boards now have an ombudsman, but the hospital sector doesn't. There's no complete mechanism for patients and families around this issue, but the Ombudsman still does not have overview over the health care system, and that is a \$52-billion budget item. It's a huge responsibility to have that—not just the patient end of it, but the fiscal end of the responsibility spectrum.

There's no mention of accountability mechanisms for how the ministry would deal with contraventions by stretcher transportation service providers. There have been complaints. People need a clear avenue to complain, because if you don't have standards and you don't have a review of who's actually performing the service and if you don't have costing control, then you're going to have complaints. There is some rationale behind this.

1740

The final piece for me is that there's no assurance that contracts between hospitals and stretcher transportation services would be made public, and there's no accountability for the public dollars that hospitals spend on stretcher transportation services. The ministry could not even confirm for us, when we did go through a briefing on this—to our health critic, during her briefing—whether these contracts would or would not be made public. They did not know the answer. That's obviously a concern because this government does not have the best track record on writing up contracts. You have to admit: The contracting out and the privatization agenda of this government is astounding to us, and the people of this province are paying the price for that.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: You're so easily confounded, so easily confused.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I shouldn't be shocked anymore, actually; you're quite right. I shouldn't be shocked anymore. For instance, the IT contract that went around calculating the used car sales tax last May. This government puts out a contract to develop an IT database around ensuring that these sales taxes are calculated correctly when a consumer, a citizen of the province, buys a used car. Last May, that program failed miserably and the government failed to collect \$2.4 million. That goes back to a quality assurance control issue around developing

those contracts, around ensuring that the government is going to get value for dollar as they contract out these services.

What happens? The minister for consumer affairs and the Minister of Finance get up and say, "Oh, no, this is a one-off." Didn't they say it was a one-off? It wasn't a glitch or a little small mistake like the SAMS thing was, because we know that that was not a glitch. That was a serious mess-up on the part of the IT company, which was once again contracted by this government without any quality assurance controls to ensure that the people of this province were going to get what they deserved, and that is a system that makes sure that the most vulnerable people in our province actually get the appropriate amount of money as they need it, because they are vulnerable. So what did we see with SAMS? We saw huge amounts of money going out to some people, and then other families, single mothers with three kids in my riding, got nothing. When you're already living on the margins, an IT mess-up like that has a great consequence. It really does.

We obviously have some concerns with the way that this legislation comes before us. These are regulations that they could actually just deal with themselves. It just begs the question before us: If you're going to call it the Strengthening and Improving Government Act when it doesn't do that, are you being straight up with the people of this province? This is a housekeeping bill. This piece of legislation will not strengthen or improve the government. You have a lot more work to do on that side of the House, particularly around fiscal, particularly with the way contracts are awarded. When the Auditor General finds that you are awarding winter maintenance road contracts to companies that don't have the equipment to do the work, that's an issue. I would rather us talk about how we can ensure that this government, when they look internally at their systems around how they procure services, is actually getting quality services. In the end, it's the people who pay the price.

I see that I have rapt attention over there. I look forward to the comments from that side of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I guess yellow is the new orange. It's cowardice and lemon-sucking. This is—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask you to withdraw.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I withdraw, Mr. Speaker.
Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Yes, just think Big Bird.

This is the absurdity of this: just how low—I've been listening to the conversation about the health care system. I used to be director of a community health centre. Almost all 13 million Ontarians now have electronic health records. We have a number of doctors and nurses on our side of the House who ran emergency wards, public health, general physicians, who will all tell you that Ontario's electronic records are state of the art.

I used to do street outreach and I worked with street health—they talk about how extraordinary it is right now having those records for street-involved people. This is an amazing breakthrough, something the third party never delivered, nor did the opposition.

We built 28 new hospitals. We've done enormous things. Just walk down the street here or go to Windsor or Oakville or North Bay. You'll find brand new hospitals in every one of those communities with state-of-the-art technology.

These are the big ideas that get elected, and why they're the third party. What do they do? They squelch and they whine and they try to nitpick, and they find the one thing that goes wrong. People confuse them for the Conservatives because they're more whiny and nitpicky and negative about public services than any other folks. It is truly astonishing to me that we have to put up with this simple-minded, endless negativity.

You look at Kitchener-Waterloo with new hospitals, with the Perimeter Institute, with Communitech, with ION. That community has seen billions of dollars of unprecedented investment, and all we do is get whining from the member.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I find it interesting that somebody who I actually find is one of the more sensitive people here in the House—and I actually understand that, because I think that it's hard sometimes. We're all human beings and some of us find it hard to deal with controversy and confrontation, and the member opposite is one of the more sensitive people. I think to use words like "whiny" and insulting people is really uncalled for. I thought the member spoke very well and shared her thoughts, and I think deserves a lot more respect.

As I mentioned before, I'm learning the protocol here slowly but surely. I would guess that if you're in government, you hold yourself to a little bit of a higher standard in terms of that. There's a reason why ministers are called "the honourable" and so on and so forth, because if you're in government, it's a little bit like the administration at a company. It's a little bit important to show that protocol.

In terms of health records, all I can tell you is that in the clinics—my husband is a physician, as I've said before, and I worked in a medical centre for many years—the doctors pay to put in the health records. They got a bit of support from the taxpayers of this province. That money that the government gave—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order.

Mrs. Gila Martow: —was not enough to cover the software support, because when you put in software—

Interjections.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Mr. Speaker, please. I hear a lot of whining over there, Mr. Speaker.

As somebody who implemented health records, the support that you have to pay to the software companies was barely covered by what this government offered the

doctors' offices. That funding has now run out. The doctors now have to continue to pay for the support, the upgrades and the hardware in their offices.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Algoma-Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: My goodness, it's so much fun being here on a Thursday afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, if you're ever in Elliot Lake—it was a mining community, and when there was a problem over at the mine, you'd hear this horn. It just seems like the previous member just hit that horn right on.

I actually want to have my comments to the member from Kitchener-Waterloo, who talked about a particular emergency program that is going to be put into place and how it is going to be basically the Wild West. That is really key in some of the comments that you brought forward, where there are going to be standards and regulations that are going to be completely missing from this whole process, which we still have not received any answers to. There's going to be a shortfall on standards.

The one key thing that is going to be missing out of this that we still have to look at—because I certainly hear it from my constituents who have had the opportunity and the need to use ambulance services from various communities, whether it's from Wawa into Sault Ste. Marie or from Chapleau leading into Timmins—is, “Who am I going to approach? Where am I going to put that complaint? Who is going to address my concerns? How do I get some satisfactory resolutions from some of my issues that I want to raise?” We haven't heard that answer yet.

1750

The other thing is, I want to disagree with the member from Kitchener-Waterloo. Mind you, she was very diplomatic in her comments in regard to the frustration that was expressed by some of the municipal leaders. I think she used the words “tipping point.” I think she was very diplomatic in regard to what I've seen over at AMO. There was certainly a greater level of frustration from all the municipal leaders who were there.

The basic message that I heard from my member is that there are a lot of shortfalls here within this bill, and it is a lot of housecleaning. We need to get down to the table, roll up our sleeves and get to work.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I just couldn't resist. I have to start with the member from Kitchener-Waterloo—I'm not sure if I should be insulted or if it's a compliment—describing me as still the new health minister. But then I realized that a party that's been around this province and country for more than 50 years is still calling itself the New Democratic Party, so the fact that I've been the health minister for 15 months is nothing compared to them still being described as new.

It's everything from commenting tangentially on the fact that for our physicians, to assist them in setting up their electronic medical records, we provide them on a physician basis—not on a clinic basis, on a physician

basis—in the order of \$30,000 to set that up, those medical records, plus on an annual basis we pay maintenance fees, ongoing licence fees and measures of the sort.

I want to get back to the CCACs as well, because the member from Kitchener-Waterloo dwelled on that. Obviously it's central to the bill that we've brought forward, which entitles me to respond in kind as well. I have to say, apart from accepting all of the Auditor General's recommendations last week, which I've done, and implementing our own 10-point action plan, I want to say, because she suggested there was no accountability through our CCACs, that I find that deeply offensive to our front-line health care workers, including our many, many thousands of nurses who work through our CCACs, to suggest that somehow their work isn't valuable or their work isn't accountable or they're not doing their best possible effort to actually make a difference in the lives of the 800,000 Ontarians that they support each year.

But then I recalled back to the early 1990s and remembered that, in fact, it was the NDP that delisted home care from OHIP in the first place. They have a history which is a curious one when it comes to home care.

I know we still have work to do. The Auditor General pointed that out to us, and we're working hard. I've committed to implementing all of her recommendations. But it's interesting, some of the comments coming from a party that has that kind of record.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the member for Kitchener-Waterloo. You have two minutes to reply.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's always interesting, this last two minutes. I think I would call a minister new until they got the job done, and there's a lot of work to be done.

I want to thank the member from Thornhill and I want to thank the member from Algoma-Manitoulin.

I always find it interesting when the Minister of the Environment says he loves Thursdays afternoons. He likes that it's non-partisan; we get a chance to talk. Then he gets up there and he brings the debate down to the lowest benchmark that you possibly could. There's no wonder that we have a climate change crisis here.

Patients in this province deserve standards. And it's not too much for the people of this province to ask for cost controls around the health care budget. It is not too much to ask for standards around patient care. This is not too much to ask for. But you know what? When you have to go back 25 years to get a dig in, it's a sorry state of affairs. Come on—25 years. I think I had just graduated from high school or something.

But here we are, and I understand why the government would want to set the bar so low in this regard: so that they can say, at some point, in some release, at some ribbon-cutting that that bar was so low that they overachieved. That's what we love to hear from this government: that they overachieve.

The people of this province deserve standards of care. Just get it done, honestly, for the love of humanity.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I don't think we got any gold medals for behaviour.

Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands adjourned until Monday, October 5, at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1755.

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Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
Kathryn McGarry, Eleanor McMahon
Taras Natyshak, Peggy Sattler
Laurie Scott, Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Education

Mr. Taras Natyshak 5505

Hispanic Heritage Month

Mrs. Cristina Martins 5505

Muslim community

Mr. Bill Walker 5505

People's Republic of China

Mr. Han Dong 5506

Sean Jackson

Mr. Tim Hudak 5506

Pension plans

Mr. Paul Miller 5506

Humber River Hospital

Mr. Monte Kwinter 5506

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder

Ms. Soo Wong 5507

Visitors

Ms. Soo Wong 5507

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Taxation

Mrs. Gila Martow 5507

Privatization of public assets

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky 5508

Lung health

Mr. Han Dong 5508

Dental care

Mme France Gélinas 5508

Public transit

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde 5508

Environmental protection

Mr. Ernie Hardeman 5508

Diagnostic services

Mme France Gélinas 5509

Student safety

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry 5509

Long-term care

Mme France Gélinas 5509

Lung health

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn 5509

Personal support workers

Mr. Jim McDonell 5509

Hospital funding

Mme France Gélinas 5510

Ontario Retirement Pension Plan

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry 5510

Post-traumatic stress disorder

Mr. Jim McDonell 5510

Residential Tenancies Amendment Act

(Rehabilitative or Therapeutic Purposes Exemption), 2015, Bill 121, Ms. Hoggarth / Loi de 2015 modifiant la Loi sur la location à usage d'habitation (exclusion pour services de réadaptation ou services thérapeutiques), projet de loi 121, Mme Hoggarth

Ms. Ann Hoggarth 5510

Mr. Ernie Hardeman 5512

Ms. Cheri DiNovo 5513

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris 5514

Mr. Jim McDonell 5515

Mr. Taras Natyshak 5515

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn 5516

Mrs. Gila Martow 5516

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry 5516

Ms. Ann Hoggarth 5517

Capping Top Public Sector Salaries Act, 2015, Bill 124, Mr. Bisson / Loi de 2015 sur le plafonnement des hauts traitements du secteur public, projet de loi 124, M. Bisson

Mr. Gilles Bisson 5518

Hon. Deborah Matthews 5519

Mr. Victor Fedeli 5520

Ms. Catherine Fife 5521

Mr. Yvan Baker 5522

Mrs. Julia Munro 5523

Mr. Wayne Gates 5523

Mr. Taras Natyshak 5524

Mr. Gilles Bisson 5525

Missing persons

Ms. Catherine Fife 5525

Mr. Granville Anderson 5526

Mr. Michael Harris 5527

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong 5529

Mr. Chris Ballard 5529

Mr. Michael Mantha 5530

Mme France Gélinas 5531

Ms. Catherine Fife 5531

Residential Tenancies Amendment Act

(Rehabilitative or Therapeutic Purposes Exemption), 2015, Bill 121, Ms. Hoggarth / Loi de 2015 modifiant la Loi sur la location à usage d'habitation (exclusion pour services de réadaptation ou services thérapeutiques), projet de loi 121, Mme Hoggarth

Second reading agreed to 5532

Capping Top Public Sector Salaries Act, 2015, Bill 124, Mr. Bisson / Loi de 2015 sur le plafonnement des hauts traitements du secteur public, projet de loi 124, M. Bisson	
The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon)	5532
Missing persons	
Motion agreed to	5532
Capping Top Public Sector Salaries Act, 2015, Bill 124, Mr. Bisson / Loi de 2015 sur le plafonnement des hauts traitements du secteur public, projet de loi 124, M. Bisson	
Second reading negatived	5533

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Strengthening and Improving Government Act, 2015, Bill 85, Mme Meilleur / Loi de 2015 sur le renforcement et l'amélioration de la gestion publique, projet de loi 85, Mme Meilleur	
Mr. Mike Colle	5533
Mrs. Gila Martow	5533
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	5534
Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti	5534
Hon. Tracy MacCharles	5534
Hon. Mitzie Hunter	5535
Mr. Arthur Potts	5536
Hon. Dipika Damerla	5537
Mr. Michael Harris	5537
Mr. Michael Mantha	5537
Hon. Michael Coteau	5538
Mrs. Gila Martow	5538
Mr. Arthur Potts	5538
Mrs. Gila Martow	5539
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	5542
Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti	5542
Mr. Robert Bailey	5542
Mr. John Vanthof	5543
Mrs. Gila Martow	5543
Ms. Catherine Fife	5543
Hon. Glen R. Murray	5546
Mrs. Gila Martow	5546
Mr. Michael Mantha	5547
Hon. Eric Hoskins	5547
Ms. Catherine Fife	5547
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	5548

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Thursday 1 October 2015 / Jeudi 1^{er} octobre 2015

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Police Record Checks Reform Act, 2015, Bill 113, Mr. Naqvi / Loi de 2015 sur la réforme des vérifications de dossiers de police, projet de loi 113, M. Naqvi	
Mr. Jagmeet Singh	5483
Mr. Glenn Thibeault	5492
Mrs. Julia Munro	5492
Ms. Catherine Fife	5492
Hon. Liz Sandals	5492
Mr. Jagmeet Singh	5493
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	5493

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mrs. Gila Martow	5493
Mme France Gélinas	5493
Mr. Jim Wilson	5493
Mr. Patrick Brown	5493
Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti	5494
Mr. Jeff Yurek	5494
Ms. Sylvia Jones	5494
Wearing of pins	
Mrs. Cristina Martins	5494

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

By-election in Sudbury	
Mr. Patrick Brown	5494
Hon. Deborah Matthews	5494
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	5494
Health care funding	
Mr. Patrick Brown	5495
Hon. Deborah Matthews	5495
Privatization of public assets	
Ms. Andrea Horwath	5496
Hon. Deborah Matthews	5496
By-election in Sudbury	
Ms. Andrea Horwath	5496
Hon. Deborah Matthews	5497
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	5497
Health care funding	
Mr. Jeff Yurek	5497
Hon. Deborah Matthews	5498

Health care funding	
Mme France Gélinas	5498
Hon. Deborah Matthews	5498
Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder	
Mrs. Cristina Martins	5499
Hon. Tracy MacCharles	5499
Probation services	
Ms. Laurie Scott	5499
Hon. Madeleine Meilleur	5500
Hon. Tracy MacCharles	5500
By-election in Sudbury	
Mr. Jagmeet Singh	5500
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	5500
First Nations	
Ms. Ann Hoggarth	5501
Hon. David Zimmer	5501
Federal election	
Mr. Michael Harris	5501
Hon. Deborah Matthews	5502
Executive compensation	
Mr. Gilles Bisson	5502
Hon. Deborah Matthews	5502
Consumer protection	
Mr. Granville Anderson	5503
Hon. David Oraziotti	5503
Property taxation	
Mrs. Gila Martow	5503
Hon. Charles Sousa	5504
Correction of record	
Mr. Gilles Bisson	5504
Visitors	
Mr. Bill Walker	5504
Ms. Harinder Malhi	5504
Ms. Eleanor McMahon	5504

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mrs. Gila Martow	5504
------------------------	------

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Sukkot	
Mrs. Gila Martow	5504

Continued on inside back cover



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First Session, 41st Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

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Monday 5 October 2015

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Lundi 5 octobre 2015

Speaker
Honourable Dave LevacPrésident
L'honorable Dave LevacClerk
Deborah DellerGreffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 5 October 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 5 octobre 2015

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I'd like to welcome Lyndsay Macdonald, Bethany Grady, Matthew Taylor, Jessica Kerridge, Heather Burt, Rashin Lamouchi and Denisa Argyo. They are here as child care advocates.

I'd also like to welcome Paul Elliott, the president of OSSTF, and I'd like to wish his members and all teachers a happy World Teachers' Day today.

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to welcome Matteo Guinci. He is my staff in the constiit office in the great riding of Markham–Unionville.

Mr. Chris Ballard: I'd like to introduce Ben Williamson from the Premier's youth council. Ben is also a resident of Newmarket–Aurora.

I'd also like to welcome the Aurora Montessori School class to Queen's Park.

Mr. Bob Delaney: On behalf of the member for Scarborough Southwest and page Krishaj Rajbhandari, I'm pleased to welcome his mother, Jasmine Rajbhandari, and his sister Isha Rajbhandari. They're in the public gallery this morning.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I'd like to welcome page captain Grace Maili Sengfah; her mother, Ja Kai Shwe; her father, Sai Shwe; and family friends Cathleen Mungal and Janelle Mungal. They will be here in the members' gallery this morning. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm not sure whether they're here—oh, they're just coming in now. It's my pleasure to introduce to the House a remarkable and inspirational group of young people, the Premier's Council on Youth Opportunities. Thank you very much for being here. The group was established in 2012 and provides advice directly to me. I'm very happy to have had a chance to meet with them this morning, and I know they're going to be having great deliberations all day.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I'm pleased to welcome to the Legislature, from my riding of Etobicoke Centre, a delegation from the Consulting Engineers of Ontario. They are led by their chair, Mr. Bruce Potter, of B.M. Ross and Associates, and their CEO, Mr. Barry Steinberg. The Consulting Engineers are here today for their inaugural Queen's Park day to meet with all of us as part of their

40th anniversary. I would invite everyone to join us at the reception in the legislative dining room this afternoon.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to welcome the delegation from Fanshawe College that is here today having a reception after question period. President Peter Devlin is here, and somewhere in this building is a former MPP for Middlesex, Bruce Smith.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Further to the Fanshawe introduction, we're delighted to have them here today. They're hosting a luncheon reception, and I invite all members to join us from 11:30 to 1:30 in room 228 to showcase Fanshawe College's excellent programs, including a gourmet lunch prepared by Fanshawe's culinary students.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to introduce Leah Hollins, who is chair of Canadian Blood Services. I'd like to take this opportunity to encourage all members of this House to visit blood.ca to see how you and your constituents have the power to give life.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I've noticed a very good friend of ours, Pierre Cyr, is also in the audience. He now works with Canadian Blood Services and is a proud resident of the great city of Ottawa. Welcome, Pierre.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: On behalf of the member for Eglinton–Lawrence and page Anna Farley, I'd like to recognize the page's mother, Manjusha Pawagi; her father, Simon Farley; and her grandmother Asha Pawagi.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I have a number of friends in the gallery. There are many members of the Citizens' Climate Lobby here. This has been one of the most powerful groups for advocacy on climate change. I'd like to welcome them today.

I also would like to welcome the many engineers from Professional Engineers Ontario and the Consulting Engineers of Ontario. My dear friend Barry Steinberg, who is also a great environmentalist as well as an engineer, is here today.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a visitor from Sudbury. Her name is Cathy Orlando. She is with Sharon Howarth and Marilyn Eriksen from the Citizens' Climate Lobby. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions? Seeing none, it's time for—a point of order from the member from Oshawa.

FATAL TRAFFIC ACCIDENT

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I believe we have unanimous consent for a moment of silence to recognize the three people tragic-

ally killed and the 16 others badly injured in the tractor-trailer accident Friday night in Durham region.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Oshawa is seeking unanimous consent for a moment's silence for the traffic accident that took place. Do we agree? Agreed.

I would ask all members, and visitors as well, to stand, if possible, and observe a moment of silence.

The House observed a moment's silence.

1040

ORAL QUESTIONS

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. The top three highest-paid energy executives in British Columbia are the managing director of Powerex, the president and CEO of Powerex, and the president and CEO of BC Hydro. Combined, those three executives are paid just under \$2 million a year in compensation. But here in Ontario, the Premier agreed to pay the new Hydro CEO over \$4 million.

Mr. Speaker, can the Premier explain why BC is able to pay their top three hydro executives less than half of what Ontario is paying their new Hydro CEO?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Energy is going to want to speak to the details of the company, Hydro One, right now. What I want to do is just make it clear that our intention in broadening the ownership of Hydro One is to leverage a current asset and allow us, as a government, to invest in the infrastructure and the new assets that are needed for the 21st century. Now, I know that the Leader of the Opposition is not supportive of that, but the fact is if we do not make those investments, if we don't invest in roads, bridges, hospitals, schools and transit infrastructure, we're not going to be competitive. We're not going to be able to compete with other jurisdictions in the world, and we're not going to be as productive as we need to be. People and goods are not going to be able to move in the way that they need to.

We are making those investments for the future productivity of this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: The question is again for the Premier, and it is on Hydro One executive compensation. In BC, hydro bills are half of what they are in Ontario. BC's Liberal government isn't forcing seniors to choose between heating and eating. Hydro One's new multi-million-dollar executive salaries will have to be paid through higher and higher hydro bills. Citizens on fixed incomes cannot afford to pay higher and higher hydro bills, but that is what is going to happen.

Why is the Premier making life more and more difficult for people in Ontario just so that she can hand out lavish executive compensation for Hydro One?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I heard someone heckling that I hadn't understood the first question. I actually had understood the first question perfectly, because it is impossible to talk about Hydro One and what we are doing in the broadening of the ownership without talking about investments in infrastructure. That's what it's about. The reason we are doing this, and we are doing it in a—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: You see, Mr. Speaker, we're committed to building infrastructure. The party opposite had no plan to build infrastructure—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Chatham-Kent-Essex, come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: When they were in office, they didn't build infrastructure; they filled in holes that had already been dug for transit. They didn't invest. We have been investing and we are going to continue to do that.

The Leader of the Opposition knows that Hydro One will be regulated by the Ontario Business Corporations Act, the Ontario Securities Act and the Ontario Energy Board. He knows that executives will have to file information with the Ontario Securities Commission, and that information will be disclosed.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again for the Premier: Hydro One executive pay is out of line with the rest of Canada. The CEO of BC Hydro is paid \$495,000. The annual compensation for the president of SaskPower is \$482,000. Last year, the head of Manitoba Hydro was paid just shy of \$500,000. The new CEO of Hydro-Québec will be paid \$480,000. The combined salaries of the six hydro executives in four provinces is still less than the \$4 million being paid to the new Hydro One CEO. Not surprisingly, ratepayers in those four provinces are paying less than they are in Ontario.

The Premier could have issued a directive to the Hydro One board setting limits on executive compensation, but she chose not to. Mr. Speaker, why didn't the Premier set limits on Hydro One salaries when so many people in Ontario are struggling with their hydro bills?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: When we look at comparable Toronto Stock Exchange companies, the pay will actually be set at the medium-to-low range. The base salary for the new CEO is \$850,000, with some incentives.

The Premier is right: The issue is infrastructure. By broadening ownership, we are able to access billions of dollars without coming from taxes, without reducing services and without raising debt.

That government doesn't know anything about infrastructure, either in the general economy or in energy.

Their average investment in infrastructure when they were in government was \$2 billion a year. They under-invested in the energy sector, so we went into deficit. We were importing a billion dollars a year. We lost transmission service, we lost distribution service and we had to invest \$34 billion to make up for their—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. People in Ontario are tired of watching the Premier spin and evade question after question on the Sudbury by-election corruption scandal. They've been writing to me, calling my office and posting online, asking when will the Premier answer a direct question.

On tape, Gerry Lougheed Jr. told Andrew Olivier that Pat Sorbara and the Premier would talk to him about job options available to him in exchange for stepping aside. People deserve to know if the Premier instructed Gerry Lougheed Jr. to say what he said. Yes or no, will the Premier testify at the corruption trial to deal with allegations that everyone in Ontario is talking about?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have a lot of faith in the process that is in place. I have faith in the authorities. We have—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Regrettably, it looks like I'm going to have to get—I'll let you finish the sentence.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We've worked with the authorities, and I will continue to work with the authorities. The Leader of the Opposition knows full well that there is an issue that is now in front of the courts and I'm not going to comment any further. I've answered 107 questions in the House, I've talked to media and I've talked outside of this House. I'll continue to work with the authorities.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: A prominent Liberal recently said, "It's really frustrating to see the level of mistrust and disgust" people have with parliamentarians. He said that someone must show some leadership and actually come clean, and the only way to be able to do that is for everybody to testify under oath. The Premier must hear this a lot, because the person who said this was the federal Liberal leader. Those were his words. Will the Premier take her friend's advice and testify under oath, yes or no?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.
Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Again, I think I'll remind the member opposite about the convention in this House and the constitutional convention that exists when it comes to matters relating to—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, how come the Speaker hasn't ruled it out of order, then?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to remind the member from Renfrew he's out of order. Please come to order.

Finish, please.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: As I've stated before many times in this House, there is a constitutional convention in our country where even the Supreme Court has indicated very clearly that if a matter is before the courts, it should not be discussed within Parliament. The kinds of questions that the members opposite and the leader of the official opposition continue to ask is a direct interference in issues that may come before the court.

The Premier, during the course of this matter, has been transparent to Ontarians and has been transparent to this Legislature. She has answered almost 110 questions relating to this matter, and we will leave it to that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: It's a simple question, and yet the Premier continues to avoid answering it. I'm not asking the Premier to tell us specifics. I'm not asking the Premier to tell us what she will say on the stand at court. I'm simply asking the Premier to answer a straightforward question. I'm asking the Premier if she will waive her parliamentary privilege and testify under oath at the trial of Gerry Lougheed Jr., yes, or no?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Government House leader.

1050

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I will again give a very simple answer to the member opposite, and I hope he really carefully listens to the advice that his own deputy leader, the member from Leeds–Grenville, once gave to us in this Legislature. The member from Leeds–Grenville said, "Stop interfering in an ongoing investigation and let it run its course."

I think the member from Leeds–Grenville was correct then, and I hope he—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds–Grenville.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In case he didn't hear it: the member from Leeds–Grenville. And if he did hear it and he chooses to continue, I'll warn him.

Carry on.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, just like he's trying to speak to me across the aisle, maybe the member from Leeds–Grenville can just whisper in his leader's ear the same piece of advice that we shouldn't be interfering in a matter that is before the courts.

Again, I remind the Leader of the Opposition, who I'm sure has a high regard and respect for the Supreme Court of Canada, that it said clearly that a well-known

rule of parliamentary practice holds that no member of the House of Commons should comment upon any matter that is pending before the courts.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. This Liberal government's record is one of scandal, wasted public money and disappointment. It is no wonder that Ontarians don't trust the Liberals, and it is no wonder that more than 80% of Ontarians don't want this Premier to sell off Hydro One.

When the Liberals last experimented with privatization, we got the Ornge and eHealth scandals, billions of dollars down the drain and literally nothing to show for it.

Why should Ontarians trust the privatization of Hydro One won't be yet another Liberal disaster?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, the question that I would put back to the leader of the third party—because she knows full well that the reason we are broadening the ownership in Hydro One is to build infrastructure. She knows that. What she doesn't talk about in her questions and, I'm assuming, in her town halls is what we are able to buy and invest in by doing this, by making this very hard decision.

I would ask the leader of the third party: Which part of the \$130 billion over the next 10 years that we are investing would she not invest? Which projects? Would it be the Barrie line that we're electrifying so that weekly trips will increase from 70 to 200-plus, the GO Transit? Would it be the Kitchener line which will increase weekly trips from 80 to 250? Would it be the Lakeshore East line, the annual ridership up from 10 million to 32 million? Are those the lines that she would cut if we did not make this—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Every single time people open their hydro bills, they are reminded about how badly the Liberals have handled the energy file. Hydro rates have nearly quadrupled since 2003—\$2 billion wasted on smart meters, and another billion dollars wasted on the moving of gas plants.

Ontarians also remember that it was this Premier who said that she would be surprised if the Liberal gas plants cost even \$40 million.

With this record, why should Ontarians trust that this Premier will sell off our hydro system in a way that makes sense to Ontarians?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The leader of the third party has full access to the information about the protections that we have put in place. She knows the people of Ontario will retain 40% ownership of the asset. She knows that we have put protections in place in terms of the ability to remove the board, the ability to remove the CEO. She knows that the Ontario Energy Board, which she has described as an independent body, has been setting electricity rates and will continue to set electricity rates.

I would ask the leader of the third party again: Would she cut the Stouffville line that we're increasing trains on? Would she cut the ride increase on the Richmond Hill line? Would she cut the LRT in Hamilton, the billion dollars that we are investing in Hamilton? Does she think that's a project that should be cut? Those are the things we're investing in, and presumably, those are the things she doesn't think need to be done.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This Premier continues to present Ontarians with a false choice between infrastructure and public hydro. Everyone knows, except perhaps the Premier and the others over there who drink the same bathwater, that this choice is absolute nonsense.

What is particularly troubling is that the Auditor General said that this government managed to waste \$8.2 billion on their infrastructure financing scheme. And now Infrastructure Ontario is embroiled in a fraud scandal.

Given the Premier's record on waste, on energy, on privatization, why should anyone trust her to sell off our most prized public asset: hydro?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The leader of the third party knows we made it clear in our budget and platform that it was going to be necessary for us to leverage assets in order to invest in new assets. In fact, she's acknowledged that she knew that. In fact, she ran on the same plan—fiscally, financially—that we had in place and acknowledged in public that she would look at assets. So she understands that it is very important for us to have the money to invest in these assets. It's not possible to just continue borrowing.

I'd ask her again, would it be the project which is the new alignment of Highway 7 between Kitchener and Guelph that she would cut? Would it be the Maley Drive extension in Sudbury that she would cut? Maybe it's the four-laning of Highway 11/17 between Thunder Bay and Nipigon. Again, those are all projects in which we're investing that apparently she doesn't think are necessary.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Premier. People's trust in this government is badly shaken. This Premier promised to do things differently, but now they see a Liberal insider criminally charged for doing the Premier's dirty work, all so the Premier could get a win for the Liberal Party. Will the Premier begin rebuilding the people's trust in her government and tell Ontarians exactly what her role was in the Sudbury bribery scandal?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I've been very open with the Legislature, the media and the public about the allegations related to the Sudbury by-election. The leader of the third party knows that. In fact, I've answered 107 questions in the Legislature. Now it's 110, 111 questions. I've addressed these questions in dozens of interactions with the media.

There is a process in place. I have faith in that process. I've co-operated with the authorities. I will continue to co-operate with the authorities. She knows this is a matter that's now before the courts, and I'm not going to comment further on it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, it's precisely because of answers like that—with 110 questions but really no answers—that the people don't trust this Premier and what she's saying. She has had many chances to rebuild the broken public trust. That's what she came in here saying she was going to do, and I would say that she has failed miserably in that regard. She could have been upfront about getting Mr. Lougheed to offer a bribe to the former Liberal candidate in Sudbury. She could have asked her deputy chief of staff to step aside when she was implicated in the bribery scandal. Instead, this Premier has arrogantly absolved herself of any responsibility whatsoever.

Why should the people of Ontario trust this Premier when she has refused to take responsibility for the Sudbury bribery scandal?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I've said, this is a matter that's before the courts. I have answered many, many questions about this. I've been very clear about the situation from my perspective, and I'm not going to comment further.

When I ran in the election and when we put forward our plan, what we said we were going to do was invest in people in this province, in their talent and skills. We said we were going to invest in infrastructure. That's exactly what we're doing. We said that we were going to increase the wages of some of the lowest-paid people in this province: personal support workers, early childhood educators, developmental support workers. We're doing that. We said that we were going to index the minimum wage. We're doing that.

We have followed through on the commitments that we made to the people of this province. We will continue to do so. That is our record.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The public trust is important for any government, and yet this Premier seems determined to break that trust at every turn. Whether she's selling off Hydro One without a mandate or being implicated on tape ordering a bribe, the trust of the people of Ontario has been very much shaken. I agree with the Chief Electoral Officer—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): If I heard what I thought I heard, I'm going to ask the member to withdraw.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I think they told you to tell me, but I will withdraw, Speaker.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I don't expect that to happen again.

Please finish.

1100

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I agree with the Chief Electoral Officer, who said that references to the Premier on Sudbury tapes threaten the government's integrity. Why should Ontarians trust anything that this Premier says?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: This province is at a very important juncture in terms of our economic viability. The commitment that I made to the people of this province is that we would make the investments that will allow us to compete globally, that we will build the infrastructure that is necessary and that we will make sure that our young people have every opportunity to get post-secondary education and get the training that they need. We said that we will make sure that people in this province have retirement security, even if we don't have a federal government that will work with us.

Those are all things that the leader of the third party should be working with us on. She should be supportive. If she is not, then I think she has to explain to the people of Ontario why building a future for this province that is bright and prosperous is not something she would support.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Start the clock.

New question.

HOUSING SERVICES CORP.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Could the minister explain how his independent review of the Housing Services Corp. failed to turn up the fact that the Housing Services Corp. paid a board member to go on a luxury eight-day, seven-night sightseeing trip with a private driver, winery tours, whale-watching, a visit to a nature reserve and meals at award-winning restaurants in Cape Town, South Africa?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I think the member opposite insists on too strict a paradox to have this government act and do what their government, who put in the Housing Services Corp., refused to do.

The member opposite refers to this as a rogue agency. It is not a rogue agency. It's an agency that you, sir, when you and—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): To the Chair, please.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: —rogue agency that they put in place. So we were proud to work with the Housing Services Corp.—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: We were proud to work with the Housing Services Corp. to do an independent review to lead to a changing of a number of their practices. The

concerns are legitimate; we share the concerns. We have different choices. We choose to look at what's broken—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Well, Mr. Speaker, if the minister can't explain how a luxury South Africa sightseeing trip slipped through, perhaps he can explain why his review failed to report that Toronto Community Housing is losing \$6.3 million a year because the ministry is forcing them to purchase through the Housing Services Corp., and why the review failed to turn up that housing money is going to pay for trips to England, Australia and California, or for alcohol, or \$300 for flannel shirts and meals in fancy restaurants, including \$8 for water?

How many more of these examples do we have to find before he calls in the auditor and has her open the books so that we can get this mess cleaned up?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Minister?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: This from the party that down-loaded social housing with no supports. They've got a lot of nerve.

Mr. Speaker, I could share with the House that the independent review—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Please finish.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: The independent review—
Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: —led the government and the HSC to refine its business practices, streamline the organizational structure, reduce overhead and administrative costs, enhance corporate reporting and transparency, revise board remuneration to be consistent with cabinet guidelines and a number of other changes, including a revisit by the group that did the study.

The new Leader of the Opposition, the member from Simcoe North, has said that when the government does things that are right, he'd stand and applaud. Well, sir, if you want to stand and applaud, you can start any time—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I loathe the idea of throwing anyone out.

New question.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. A little over a week ago, the government quietly released a supplement to its budget estimates. It turns out that there was an additional unbudgeted expense that wasn't mentioned in the original estimates, and it's big.

The government has agreed to pay a \$2.6-billion tax bill owed by Hydro One to the Ontario Electricity Financial Corp., which will use the cash to pay down the debt. This means there will be \$2.6 billion less cash available for things like infrastructure.

Why is the government spending the transit money on an unbudgeted \$2.6-billion tax break for Hydro One's new private owners?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, under the tax provisions, if an LDC were to sell its assets over 10%, there was a departure tax that was paid by the vendor—not the purchaser, the vendor. In this particular case, Hydro One, as a vendor, is required to pay to itself \$2.6 billion in tax. That \$2.6 billion is being reinvested in its own corporation. It's a total wash. It's a total equalization of receiving from one hand and returning with the other. And the member knows, because this was explained to him in estimates and he seemed to accept it. But in this particular show in here, he decides he is going to try to put an implication of some wrongdoing.

It's perfectly normal and perfectly appropriate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, Ontarians are paying a \$2.6-billion tax bill owed by Hydro One. This expense wasn't accounted for in the budget—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Please finish.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: In exchange for \$2.6 billion in cash, according to the Hydro One prospectus, the government gets \$2.6 billion worth of shares in Hydro One, except we already own 100% of Hydro One. The minister says this transaction is “fiscally neutral.” To me, it looks like an accounting trick.

Mr. Speaker, \$2.6 billion in real cash is leaving the treasury to pay off Hydro bondholders. In return, the government will get \$2.6 billion worth of shares in a company it already owns 100% of. How can this be fiscally neutral?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: It can be fiscally neutral just by that member listening to what I said in answer to the first question, and that is quite simply that a departure tax is payable by any utility that sells more than 10%—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. The member from Eglinton–Lawrence.

Finish, please.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The government is the people of Ontario. We're paying \$2.6 billion to the government, the people of Ontario, and that is being put back into Hydro One as it moves forward. It's a total wash, and I really don't understand the emotion and the diatribe that we're getting from this member, because it's clear. It has also been cleared by the auditors—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

1110

ROAD SAFETY

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. This summer, the Halton Regional Police initiated the Reducing Rural Speeds Project in the north end of Burlington. This safety initiative aims to reduce the speeds of vehicles travelling along rural roads in order to promote safer driving habits. As part of this initiative, police conducted a summer safety blitz which saw them hand out twice as many tickets to drivers this year than last.

Of the almost 100 non-speeding-related tickets handed out by the police, the vast majority were for distracted driving. Mr. Speaker, distracted driving truly is an epidemic that not only affects those living in my community but indeed all Ontarians. Can the minister please tell members of this House what our government is doing to help prevent this senseless and preventable crime?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to begin by thanking the member from Burlington for the question, and also for being an outstanding champion for road safety, not only in Burlington but right across the province of Ontario.

The evidence truly speaks for itself: A driver who uses a cellphone is four times more likely to be in an accident than drivers who are focused on the road. That's why our government is leading the charge against distracted driving. As of February 2010, police began issuing tickets for this completely preventable offence. And with the passing of Bill 31, the Making Ontario's Roads Safer Act, in June of this year, drivers now face stiffer fines and penalties upon conviction. In fact, Ontario now has among the highest fine ranges in Canada.

Speaker, our government also made regulatory changes that apply three demerit points upon conviction for distracted driving.

There is no easy solution to changing inappropriate driver behaviour, but our government will continue to work as hard as possible to discourage texting behind the wheel.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I want to thank the minister for his response. We've all seen how distracted driving can negatively impact the lives of others, but it is not just drivers who are affected by this behaviour and these poor choices. All members of this House know that Ontario's roads are amongst the safest in North America, but it is extremely important that we consider the safety of everyone using our roads. This means keeping our roads safe for drivers, yes, but in particular, for our most vulnerable road users: cyclists and pedestrians.

In the minister's response, he mentioned the passage of Bill 31. Can the minister please provide members of this House with further information on how Bill 31 is already making Ontario's roads safer for all road users?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Again, I thank the member for her follow-up question. She's 100% right: Our government takes the safety of all road users very seriously.

In addition to the distracted driving provisions contained in Bill 31, we've taken significant steps towards improving the safety of pedestrians and cyclists on our roads. This includes requiring drivers of motor vehicles to maintain a minimum distance of one metre when passing cyclists on highways; increasing the fine for those who improperly open or leave open the doors of motor vehicles; and requiring drivers to remain stopped at pedestrian crossovers or school crossings until those crossing the street are off the roadway.

I was very pleased to see that Bill 31, this past June, passed here in this Legislature with all-party support. These provisions, combined with stiffer distracted driving penalties, will help ensure the safety of drivers, cyclists and pedestrians. Speaker, this truly is another great example of how we can work together to keep all Ontarians safer on our roads.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Premier. There are new discoveries in a recent report by Philip Cross. The title, Ontario—No Longer a Place to Prosper, sums up the facts revealed by the former chief economic analyst for StatsCan.

It turns out that the Liberal spending spree was in full swing years before the recession, and growth fell just as much in the years before the recession as it did afterwards. So all their excuses blaming their tax-and-spend policies on the recession have now been debunked. The fact is, Ontario's declining economy is a direct result of failed Liberal economic policy, and it is the Liberals who raised costs, hurting families, seniors and businesses.

When will the Premier realize that she is the one keeping Ontario from realizing its full potential?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm very pleased, Mr. Speaker, that the Fraser Institute report ranked Ontario number one in North America for foreign direct investment. I think that's a really good thing.

I think it's wonderful that since August 2014 Ontario gained 64,000 net new jobs. We're increasing the job number in this province, Mr. Speaker. Our unemployment rate has gone down. In fact, unemployment in Ontario is 6.8%, which is under the national average of 7%. We are making investments in order to be able to compete globally.

I introduced the Premier's youth advisory council at the beginning of the day. It's very important to me that we hear from young people. They are the people who are going to be looking for those jobs. They are the people who are going to be creating those jobs. That's why the investments that we're making are so important.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the Premier: That response tells us this Liberal government has absolutely no intention of listening to the experts.

If the Fraser report is not enough, we've heard the same facts from the Ontario chamber, the federation of business, the manufacturers' association, and the list goes

on. They all told us the same facts: Since the Liberals took office, all of our numbers and our jobs have headed south.

It's unfortunate they didn't listen to the Auditor General last year. She told us that if the Liberals continue down this destructive path, they will crowd out the services Ontarians deserve. We know what that means in my hometown of North Bay, where they just fired 158 front-line health care workers, half of whom were nurses.

When will this government realize it's their own mismanagement that is costing the people of Ontario their jobs?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I really appreciate the opportunity that the member opposite gave me to talk about North Bay regional hospital. We know that there are some changes under way. Nothing has been finalized. In fact, the LHIN is expecting the final version of the hospital's improvement plan on October 16, in just about a week's time. They're going to review that. They're going to continue to discuss this with the hospital. It's not true at all that 50% of the individuals are nursing staff; it's far less. In fact, many of them will be through attrition. But even more important, it's not even decided yet. This is a plan which still has to go through the LHIN. It has to be approved by the LHIN and the ministry as well.

It's important and prudent—I would suggest that the member opposite read the CEO of the hospital's op-ed of a week ago, where he explained very succinctly why the changes are being made.

HOME CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

Speaker, the Auditor General's report clearly shows that 39% of the CCAC budgets that is supposed to go to patient care actually never reaches any patients. That's almost \$1 billion of public money that never finds its way to patients' homes, to provide the home care that people need and depend on. I've asked the minister before if he knew this, but he did not have an answer.

So I'll ask him again today: Did the minister know that nearly \$1 billion of the money that he sends to CCACs, the money that he oversees, never really gets to the patients who need home care?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Well, Mr. Speaker, what I will do is stand up and defend the hard work of our front-line health care workers in our CCACs, including the thousands of individuals who work as care coordinators, who develop patient plans—they purchase equipment and services for individuals at home. The member opposite describes that as overhead. I don't. I actually think that's an insult to the hard-working nurses and nurse practitioners who are our care coordinators and who are providing that patient care and making a difference to the more than 800,000 individuals around this province who do receive services.

Mr. Speaker, I have accepted, endorsed and agreed with all of the recommendations of the Auditor General. This government intends on implementing every single one of her recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: As you read through the auditor's report, you clearly see the government's failures. The home care system in Ontario is failing patients on eligibility; it is failing on wait-lists; it is failing on care levels and on quality of care. Our home care system is broken, and it needs to be fixed.

The Auditor General's recommendation is that the entire structure of home care delivery needs to change. Does the minister agree that it is the structure that needs to change? Because none of his 10-point plan talks about structure.

1120

Hon. Eric Hoskins: The 10-point action plan that I released earlier this year was all of the recommendations from Gail Donner and her expert panel that advised us on what to do. She said, very importantly, that form follows function. We made 10 changes that will improve the quality of care. The Auditor General has now given us a road map to allow us to make those structural and governance changes, if required.

But I have to say, I'm not going to take lessons from the party opposite, from the third party, the party that dented home care from OHIP when they were government.

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN

Mr. Joe Dickson: My question is for the Associate Minister of Finance.

Over the past few months, there has been a growing awareness in my community about the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. My constituents are pleased to see our government taking action to close the retirement savings gap for millions of Ontarians, particularly seniors.

Businesses in my riding are eager to learn more about our government's plans to enhance retirement security across the province. Businesses are already beginning to make plans for the implementation of the ORPP. Some business owners have spoken and have asked how the government will be phasing in the enrolment of the plan and when different employers will begin making contributions. I know the minister recently announced the enrolment schedule for the ORPP.

Mr. Speaker, through you, can the minister please update the House on when businesses will be enrolled in the plan?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I want to thank the member for that very important and timely question. Our goal is that by 2020, every employee in Ontario will be part of the ORPP or a comparable workplace pension plan.

We know that businesses need time to plan in order to implement the ORPP. I heard this throughout my consultations with businesses, particularly small businesses. Our staged approach will help ease the transition for

business. Large businesses without registered workplace plans will be the first to start making contributions in January 2017. Medium-sized businesses will begin in the following year, and small businesses without workplace plans will begin making contributions in 2019.

As well, all employers will see their contribution rates phased in gradually over three years. This is a reasonable, responsible approach that ensures that we balance the retirement security of Ontarians with the needs of business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Joe Dickson: Thank you to the minister for that response. I know that business owners in my riding will be glad to hear about the steps our government is taking to help businesses plan the implementation of the ORPP. Specifically, I know that small businesses, such as my own in my riding, will appreciate that they have additional time to adjust to the introduction of the ORPP.

Mr. Speaker, again, through you to the minister: Some businesses in my riding offer their employers a defined contribution plan that just falls below the comparability test put forward by our government. They are curious what different options are available to them, and they're wondering whether they will automatically be enrolled in the ORPP if their plans do not meet a comparability test, or are there ways for them to adjust their plans to be exempt from the ORPP. Mr. Minister—

Interjection: Madam Minister.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Madam Minister—I was thinking of Mr. Speaker; he's always on my mind—could you please outline the options available to Ontario businesses—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Well, I'm on yours.
Minister.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I want to thank the wonderful member from Ajax-Pickering for that great question and the work he's doing on behalf of his constituents.

Our enrolment schedule outlines that employers who offer registered workplace pension plans that don't meet our comparability threshold will start in 2020. This gives these employers well over four years to adjust their plans, if they choose to do so. For example, a company with an existing DC plan would have two options: They could increase the contribution rates to 8% or they could alternatively contribute to the ORPP. Either way, they would have until 2020 to decide what to do with their existing plan.

Mr. Speaker, this is a responsible, reasoned and proven approach that balances the needs of businesses today with the needs of workers in the future, like our young people here from the Premier's advisory council.

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN

Mrs. Julia Munro: Speaker, my question, through you, is to the Premier. The Premier has said that the mandatory Ontario pension plan will be good for the province, yet recent studies show that 90% of small business owners are opposed to the ORPP.

An employee making \$45,000 a year would pay just shy of \$800 towards the ORPP, with their employer contributing an equal amount. While larger businesses may be able to absorb these added costs, smaller businesses will be forced to either reduce the size of their workforce or the hours those employees are able to work.

Mr. Speaker, we all know it's impossible to save for retirement if you don't have a job. How many job losses will it take for this Premier to axe her job-killing payroll tax?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Associate Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Mr. Speaker, what a great question from the opposition, because it is important that we talk about retirement security in this province. Just last week, we heard that the numbers of—

Interjections.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Mr. Speaker, we know that our population is aging. We know that two thirds of Ontarians do not have a workplace pension plan today. That's why we're taking leadership to implement the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan.

The member opposite knows full well that the ORPP is not a payroll tax. Let's look at the evidence. The Globe and Mail called this idea "bogus phrasing" and said "this money is really deferred salary for workers to access in retirement."

When people retire, they need to have the opportunity to continue to consume in retirement, and that is what we're doing by strengthening retirement security with the ORPP.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Julia Munro: Mr. Speaker, again through you to the Premier: Premier, the ORPP's administrative costs are expected to range between \$130 and \$200 per member per year, so a worker who contributes \$800 per year will lose up to 25% of their contributions off the top in fees alone. That doesn't sound like a very good return on investment to me. Ontarians won't be saving more; they will just be losing more off their payroll stub.

Let me remind you: When you feel the strong hand of government in your pocket taking the money, that's a tax. Will the Premier commit to saving jobs and abandoning the poorly planned, job-killing payroll tax?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: As I was saying, the member opposite knows full well that this is not a payroll tax. This is deferred compensation for the members who contribute to the plan. We're ensuring—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shouting people down is not impressive at all.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Nor is making comments while I'm trying to get control.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: From the Canadian Payroll Association: "It is not a payroll tax.... It is a pension plan, not a tax."

From pension expert Keith Ambachtsheer: "People making this claim should be required to take ... economics 101."

Mr. Speaker, this is about ensuring that we have retirement security for the people of Ontario. If we had a willing federal government in Ottawa that would co-operate with Ontario and ensure that we can manage this plan as efficiently and effectively as possible, this would be better for the people—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The member from Prince Edward–Hastings is warned.

New question.

MINERAL EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION

Mr. Michael Mantha: Mr. Speaker, good morning to you. My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Today, Northern Superior Resources has gone to trial with the Ontario government over its failure to set real guidelines on the mining process in Ontario. NSR is the fourth mining company since 2009 to bring legal action against the government over the exact same issue.

1130

The failure to get consultations under way demonstrates the misguided priorities of the Liberal government and is paving the path for further disputes. Why has this government failed to do their job in creating a plan for resource development and jobs in the north?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I think the member understands that I certainly can't speak about a specific case that may be before the courts, but I will say that we endeavour in every way and work as hard as we can to work as closely as we can with the companies that are bringing potential opportunities forward in the province of Ontario, as we work very closely with the First Nations and try to bring organizations, groups and communities together for that purpose as well. That will be our continued goal, and that's something we have had great success with in so many ways.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Again to the minister: From 2005 until it lost access to the area of the claims in 2012, NSR spent over \$12 million in acquisition, maintenance and exploration. Other companies like Cliffs, Noront and KWG have equally spent tens of millions and have grown extremely frustrated or given up entirely, leaving the province, all stating that the Liberal government has not set any real guidelines on development.

If the government continues to mismanage mining development in the north, we will see the lawsuits pile up and the jobs will be lost—gone forever.

I ask again, as I've asked several times before, will the minister act now to actually develop a plan for good, value-added job creation that treats First Nations as partners?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: We are very proud of the work we're doing with the consultations with First Nations as we are with the mining companies in the province of Ontario, and we have got a great story to tell. It's

unfortunate that the member is choosing to focus on some of the challenges we have when there are such great stories to tell.

We continue to be the number one jurisdiction for exploration in the country, let alone in North America. We continue to have increasing mineral production—\$11 billion in 2014. We continue to open up new mines. The member knows that well, as do all members of the House. Those opportunities will continue to happen. Whether we're talking about Goldcorp's Cochenour expansion or Rubicon Minerals, the new opportunities at New Gold, Greenstone gold—these are opportunities that will require us to work closely together in a very positive way, and, of course, that's something I look forward to continuing to do with my colleague across the House.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Harinder Malhi: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade.

Ontario is home to many of the top-ranked post-secondary institutions in the world. Our universities and colleges are known for their prestigious faculty, dedicated students and innovative programs. I, like many others, enjoy watching to see what new and exciting things will come from our schools each year.

Last month, I was proud to see one of Ontario's great innovators, Ryerson University, achieve international recognition and some phenomenal opportunities with the help of the Ministry of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade. In August of this year, the CEO for the UK-based organization Innovation Birmingham visited Ryerson after six months of communications fostered by the Ontario international offices in the United Kingdom.

In September, on your trade mission to the UK, I saw that Ryerson signed a memorandum of understanding with Innovation Birmingham. Speaker, through you to the minister, could the minister provide more information about this MOU?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the member from Brampton–Springdale for asking the question.

There's a very strong economic tie between Ontario and the UK. We have a shared political and cultural heritage and a similar economic growth pattern. The most important thing in engaging the world and expanding trade and investment opportunities is building relationships. Ontario is eager to develop mutually beneficial commercial relationships with Birmingham companies and organizations.

As the member knows, on my last mission to the UK, Ryerson University signed a partnership agreement with Innovation Birmingham. Under the agreement, Ryerson and IB will launch the Next Big Idea Contest and showcase the possibility of virtual incubation and collaboration. It is already clear that great things will be coming out of this mission.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Harinder Malhi: I'd like to thank the minister for his answer. I know the ministry has been working

diligently to promote Ontario's trade interests around the world. It is great to hear that an emphasis is also being placed on fostering non-competitive relationships in various countries as well.

I'm sure these efforts will bring about even more beneficial partnerships between countries and allow for further innovation, like we're seeing at Ryerson. I'm particularly excited to hear about the Next Big Idea Contest.

Future relationships can be modelled on the relationship we saw in the UK: two cutting-edge innovators, Innovation Birmingham and Ryerson University, teaming up with a major UK bank and with the Ontario government to help companies, organizations and regions go global.

Speaker, could the minister provide more information about the Next Big Idea Contest and how it will help foster relationships in the future?

Hon. Michael Chan: The Next Big Idea Contest is intended to discover innovative IT companies and provide them with the opportunity to scale up internationally. It has been running in India for three years and is in its second iteration in the UK.

The first outcome of the agreement between Birmingham and Ryerson is proposed to be the second edition of this contest. It will be open to existing Ontario and Birmingham digital media and IT companies, whose services and products can be scaled to reach the global audience.

There will be one winner for Ontario, ready to grow into the UK, and one winner from Birmingham looking to invest in Ontario.

Speaker, I am excited to see what great partnerships and even better ideas come out of this contest.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is to the Associate Minister of Long-Term Care. The provincial auditor tells us the two ministers responsible for health care in Ontario are failing miserably when it comes to living up to their responsibility to protect Ontario's senior citizens.

Here are the facts: You have not brought in standards of care in home care, and you have no standards of care in our nursing homes.

This minister is supposed to be the one protecting our seniors, standing on guard for them and implementing tough standards. On the other hand, she has missed inspection deadlines, issued zero work orders, and as a result, long-term-care residents have died from neglect or abuse.

I ask, will the minister bring in the standards of care? Yes or no?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I thank the member opposite for his question.

The fact is that we have been taking a number of steps to beef up our implementation and our inspections. For example, Mr. Speaker, in 2014, for the very first time, we inspected every single home in Ontario—across the province. What's more, we are continuing this in 2015.

What's really egregious here is the fact that when the party opposite were in power, they forgot to inspect homes at all for long periods of time. For them to say that we are not inspecting is a little rich, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: Back to the Associate Minister of Long-Term Care: These people are our parents, our grandparents, and the minister continues to neglect them. They're left to sleep in soaking diapers, developing broken skin and bedsores.

It has been 10 years since an inquest made the specific recommendation to this government to bring in standards of care at long-term-care homes, but it has done nothing.

As a result, neglect and death continue to happen. Most recently, sadly, it happened to Fatemeh Hajimoradi and Dorothy Benson, who died from bedsores complications.

I ask, why will the minister not stand up here and admit that when it comes to living up to her responsibilities to protect Ontario's frail senior citizens, she has been nothing short of a very, very bad failure?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Again, I thank the member opposite for his question.

I just want to assure Ontarians and this House that the safety of our residents in our long-term-care homes is my number one priority.

When our families place their seniors in our long-term-care homes, they do so with the trust that we will look after them. I'm very conscious of this trust, and I take that very seriously.

That is why we are committed to providing increased support to long-term-care home operators. In fact, this year we increased funding to long-term-care homes by 2.5%, and since coming to office, we have increased funding for long-term-care homes by 85%.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to continue to say that the safety of our long-term-care residents continues to be a priority.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Constituents have been contacting my office in London and telling us that they have been waiting for years to get an appointment at the London Health Sciences Centre for surgery or to see medical specialists for diagnosis.

London's surgery wait times for diagnostic scans and surgeries are significantly higher than the provincial wait times. Michael Allen, a two-time cancer survivor, was diagnosed in January 2015 as high risk for heart attack and stroke, and he only got into surgery last week after he suffered a stroke in September. Gail Silvestro had to go to Strathroy to see a specialist due to London's wait times and now will be waiting at least a year for surgery in order for her to be able to walk.

The people of London are tired of waiting for this government to take action. When will this government stop failing the people of this province, putting lives and

well-being at risk with appallingly long wait times for crucial surgeries?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question. The member opposite didn't have the opportunity to mention that we were the first government in the history of this province to actually begin measuring wait times for important surgeries, as well as ER wait times.

When we began in 2003 to measure wait times, because we inherited the legacy of cuts from the Progressive Conservatives, we had the worst wait times in all of Canada when we came into office. Now, we have the best wait times, the shortest wait times, in all of Canada.

We continue to work on this. We're making hundreds of millions of dollars of investments to continue to decrease those wait times, whether they're for surgeries or for ERs, other processes and services. That's an obligation and a responsibility that we take extremely seriously.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Oxford has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing concerning the Housing Services Corp. This matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1142 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MAX KEEPING

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Rare in a city of almost a million people that its entire population would agree that one man was the heart, the soul and the pride of his community, but that's Ottawa's Max Keeping.

Born a proud Newfoundlander, he took the nation's capital by storm. Max never forgot what Ottawa gave to him or, for that matter, who he was. What he received he gave back tenfold. He was a philanthropist, donating many hours and millions of dollars for charity, including to our own Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario. He was a children's champion. He supported organizations like Child and Youth Friendly Ottawa, and made his newscast kid-friendly. He was the first in Canada to do so.

He was a broadcaster, the public face of CJOH, now CTV Ottawa. Max was a guest in eastern Ontario homes during the supper hour news for almost four decades. He was a trusted face, even when the toughest news was about to be delivered.

He was also a family man. He was devoted to his sons and his grandchildren.

Although Max was the most important person in Ottawa, he never once had an air about him. Instead, he made every single person he spoke to feel that they were the most important person in the room.

When he passed last week, fellow broadcasters, politicians, NHL players, hospital CEOs, farmers—everyone had a Max Keeping story. He was a celebrity we all knew personally, and that was a real credit to his humanity and his humbleness.

His life, how he embraced others, his kindness and his love of community is now our lesson, one which I know will be honoured by Max's family as well as all of us in Ottawa. On behalf of the Ontario Legislature, I want to thank Max for his lifelong contribution to the city of Ottawa, and I wish to convey my most heartfelt condolences to his family and his grandchildren. There will never be another Max Keeping.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I rise today to share reflections on two conferences I attended over the weekend in London.

The first was Manufacturing Matters, organized by the London Economic Development Corp. Bringing together more than 400 manufacturers and service providers, this was the largest gathering ever of southwestern Ontario's manufacturing sector, demonstrating that manufacturing remains vital to London's economy.

The second was called The Future of Work, organized by the London Poverty Research Centre. Two leading economists, Armine Yalnizyan and Mike Moffat, presented data showing that in Canada's changing labour market, a job is no longer a ticket out of poverty. In a region that has lost one third of its manufacturing jobs over the past decade, this is a trend that took root early and deeply in London.

At the first conference, we heard about the demand for skilled workers to fill new jobs in advanced manufacturing, and the value of co-ops and internships to address workforce needs.

At the second, we heard about the twin forces of globalization and automation that have led to plant closures, the displacement of skilled workers and a generation of young people facing precarity as the new normal.

My take-away? Not only must we provide young people with opportunities to participate in paid co-ops and internships, but we must also support older workers whose skills are less easily transferred. We must create more affordable housing, increase child care spaces and build transit to get people to work. While doing everything we can to spur innovation, we must also ensure that no one is left behind and that every Ontarian has a place in the new economy.

MAX KEEPING

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to join the member for Nepean—Carleton in saying a few words about Max. Last week, Ottawa lost one of our true leaders, Max Keeping. Max was a journalist, a philanthropist and a true community builder.

As anchor for CJOH nightly news, he found his way into our living rooms for over 30 years, and the news

always included community. He had attended thousands of events for charity over that time. In his career, he raised more than \$100 million.

As a builder, he reminded us all that community matters, and he knew how to bring us together. Max could throw a good party. However, first and foremost he was a champion for children. As a cheerleader for the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario and other causes, he helped us find our way to our pockets to support children's needs: saving the cardiac program at CHEO, more support for children's mental health or scholarships for children in care. He wanted every child to have an opportunity to succeed.

I had the pleasure of working with Max on many occasions, and it was never about Max; it was always about someone else. Communities need individuals who give expression to our collective desire that all of our children have a chance to thrive. Max was ours.

Max, thank you for your unwavering commitment to our community and our children. To his family, our condolences. Max, we will miss you. God bless.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Todd Smith: Fall is in the air, and because it is, that can only mean one thing: Another round of cuts and staff uncertainty at Quinte Healthcare hospitals. To make up for an \$11.5-million funding shortfall created largely because Ontario's Liberal government can't manage money, jobs and services will be cut at hospitals in Picton, Belleville, Bancroft and Trenton. Money is being spent on debt that people in Prince Edward-Hastings want spent on the services they need in their hospitals.

This morning, we learned that in order to close the \$11.5-million shortfall, QHC is proposing a reduction of nearly all surgery services at Trenton Memorial, \$4.5 million in direct care cuts and changes that one QHC executive calls "very hard on our staff."

During the years of this government, QHC has been the recipient of almost continual funding shortfalls from the ministry.

Speaker, if I could, I'd like to direct some comments directly to my constituency back at home: The deficit this government is running is costing you your health care services. QHC has had to come up with \$25 million in cuts over four years to make up for funding shortfalls because the Liberal government at Queen's Park doesn't have any money left. The government says money is going into better home care services, but the Auditor General says services are being cut there too to pay for fat-cat salaries.

The third-largest expense in the budget is how much we pay to service our debt, and it's also the fastest growing. That's why cuts like this have gone from being rare to happening annually.

TAXI INDUSTRY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I rise today to raise the concerns of taxi drivers and limousine drivers across my con-

stituency and across Ontario. Taxi drivers are raising concerns around Uber. Their concerns are that Uber perhaps doesn't pay HST, which means lost revenue for the province and the country. They're concerned that Uber drivers often don't claim that income and that's another source of loss of revenue. They're also raising awareness and concerns around the fact that perhaps Uber drivers don't pay for commercial insurance, which may leave drivers and passengers unprotected. They continue to raise concerns around the lack of training, that perhaps Uber drivers may make roads more unsafe in our province. They also raise concerns regarding the lack of accountability, that drivers are not accountable against specific complaints. Finally, they raise concerns around the safety of vehicles which aren't subject to municipal standards.

Our taxi and limousine drivers provide an essential and important service in our province. They are well-trained professionals whose vehicles meet municipal standards and they provide an important service which must be respected by this government. This government has a responsibility to address their concern and I ask the government to address the concerns raised by these drivers. They certainly provide a very important service. They are well-trained professionals who deserve that respect.

1310

EVENTS IN BEACHES-EAST YORK

Mr. Arthur Potts: I want to spend a moment here to tell you a little bit about what I did during the opportunity of the legislative recess over the summer.

Certainly, a great highlight for me was when the Premier of Ontario, Kathleen Wynne, came to Beaches-East York. During her visit, we went to Toronto East General Hospital, where she made a very significant funding announcement: \$125 million over the next year for improvements for hospitals across the province, including \$1.7 million for Toronto East General Hospital to renew its aging infrastructure. So the Premier and I toured the hospital's new and very unique Chest Centre. It's the only facility in Toronto providing various lung health services under one roof. The new CEO, Sarah Downey, who has been there for about six months, is just doing a fantastic job.

We then went on to Centre 55, a great community hub in Beaches-East York. The Premier and I met some of the hundreds of campers from across the community. We were greeted by Debbie Visconti, Nancy Culver and Jason Balgopal, who run the place. The campers were very interested in the Premier's visit and they asked her lots of great questions like, how did she get into politics? It was excellent.

We then went down to Queen Street, where we went to the Beacher Cafe. Thank you so much to Kumiko Martineau and her staff, who made our visit on the patio such a great experience.

I was also pleased to take the Premier out for some mainstreeting on Queen Street East. We dropped in at

Tori's Bakeshop, Arts on Queen, and the Remarkable Bean, a wonderful coffee shop in the riding, but we held off on going to the matinee movie at the Fox. Maybe we can do that another time.

So my appreciation to all the residents and the businesses we interacted with that day. It was a wonderful, wonderful visit.

INTERNATIONAL PLOWING MATCH

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm proud to stand here today to commend the organizers of this year's International Plowing Match and Rural Expo, held in Finch, Ontario, in the great riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. What started as a dream for Stormont Plowmen's Association member Jeff Waldroff turned into the largest event in the history of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. I want to commend Jeff and IPM chair Jim Brownell for organizing such a great and extremely successful event.

Almost 83,000 people attended the 2015 IPM. The community assembled over 1,200 volunteers, with over \$500,000 in donations and another \$600,000 in in-kind work. The event was capped off with terrific weather that allowed the visitors to take in all the many sites. Whether it was the dancing tractors, the many exhibitions, farm machinery, seed companies, service delivery companies, or dealers of all kinds, it really was a great event. It was a chance to showcase what we feel is the best area of Ontario, in eastern Ontario, where people came down and saw the great crops—agriculture at its finest.

We're looking forward to next year. It's in Wellington, Ontario, and it will be another great event.

DAVENPORT-PERTH NEIGHBOURHOOD AND COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I rise today to recognize a fantastic organization in my riding of Davenport, the Davenport-Perth Neighbourhood and Community Health Centre.

The DPNCHC, as it is so fondly referred to, supports people in the Davenport-Perth area who are suffering from economic and social barriers, and empowers them to enrich their lives through the community. It also provides a space for people to meet and connect across all ages and cultures. From the Ontario Early Years Centre to the Youth Leadership program for teenagers to computer training for seniors to the EdgeWest clinic, this facility prides itself on providing services to everyone.

On August 20, I was honoured to invite Premier Kathleen Wynne to the DPNCHC for a tour and to host a community round table meeting with her and community organizations to discuss issues that we face in Davenport.

Events like this show how our government understands the importance of health and community centres like this one. I'm proud to continue to uphold this commitment by supporting the DPNCHC through the Ontario Trillium Fund.

Mr. Speaker, on September 12, DPNCHC celebrated their 30th anniversary. I was humbled to be a part of the celebrations and to see a whole community come together and recognize the wonderful work that this organization does for Davenport. I want to thank executive director Kim Fraser for leading this organization into its 30th year and ensuring that it continues to be such an integral part of this community.

Thank you very much, DPNCHC, for all the work you do. Happy anniversary.

SENIOR CITIZENS PERSONNES ÂGÉES

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Last Thursday was the International Day of Older Persons. As a former social worker and co-owner of a retirement residence, I understand the value seniors provide to our communities. It is their contribution we can build upon, and their guidance and experience we can learn from to improve our society. We must appreciate the contribution of seniors and the wealth of knowledge and wisdom they bring to our province and our communities.

The Canadian population surpassed a milestone last Tuesday: For the first time ever, there are more senior citizens than children.

Il est prévu que le nombre de personnes âgées vivant à Ottawa fera plus que doubler au cours des 20 prochaines années, avec une projection de 250 000 individus. Nous devons donc planifier en conséquence.

I am proud to share that in 2013, the city of Ottawa was inducted into the Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities by the World Health Organization. This is thanks to the city's Older Adult Plan and Age-Friendly Ottawa, an initiative led by the Council on Aging. With the first term of the Older Adult Plan finishing at the end of 2014, the city of Ottawa is currently refreshing the action plan for the 2015 to 2018 period.

This year, the Council on Aging of Ottawa received over \$18,000 through the Ontario Age-Friendly Community Planning Grant to collect data to measure the city's progress in achieving their age-friendly community goals. This is a great initiative on the part of the Ontario government, and I hope other communities take part and take advantage of it.

Merci, monsieur le Président.

Le Président (L'hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup. I thank all members for their statements.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ONTARIO AGRICULTURE WEEK

Hon. Jeff Leal: I just want to say at the outset that because I'm speaking in about 25 minutes to the Advancing Women conference on agriculture, I can't stay in

the House to hear the comments from my honourable friend from Huron—Bruce and my honourable colleague from Timiskaming—Cochrane. I just wanted to let you know that. I'm not skipping out; I just have a speaking engagement, so I wanted to let you know that. Thank you so much for extending me that courtesy.

It's my honour to rise in the House today, so close to Thanksgiving, in celebration of Ontario Agriculture Week. This week is about recognizing and celebrating the people who bring good things that grow in Ontario to us, Ontario's hard-working farmers. These are the people who look out at their empty fields each spring morning not knowing what will happen or what the next few months will hold, wondering whether mother nature will co-operate to make those fields bountiful by our fall.

Every time, every year, time and time again, farmers remain committed to the cause of helping to feed Ontarians, Canadians and, indeed, the rest of the world. Farmers are unwavering in their commitment and determination to this cause. Ontario farmers are passionate about what they do. They have to deal with the uncertainties they face each and every day.

Farmers are deeply rooted in tradition, yet are progressive and innovative. They are constantly mastering new tools and new technologies, creating new methods to be more effective to help make their farms profitable, while growing the highest-quality and safest food in the world.

Ontario's farmers produce more than 200 agricultural commodities, everything from quinoa to kale to ginseng to bok choy. They are recognizing and fulfilling today's global demands, creating specific meats, produce and other agricultural food products to meet the needs of consumers around the world and right here at home.

Ontario farmers are, at the same time, keeping our economy strong. In 2014, Ontario's agri-food exports were \$12.5 billion, with people in regions as far as the Middle East, Japan and China enjoying great things that are grown, raised and harvested by our farmers right here in Ontario.

Ontario is home to a diverse range of agricultural products. Ontario is the largest area for winter wheat, grapes, apples, peaches, sour cherries, pears and plums in Canada. We grow almost 99% of the country's ginseng, which is known as the highest quality in the world. We have 1.5 million maple taps. More than half of Canada's greenhouses are located here, and we have the largest share of the Canadian nursery and sod areas.

1320

As a sector, Ontario's agri-food industry employs more than 780,000 individuals in communities right across the province, contributing more than \$34 billion in GDP, second only to the auto sector.

Ontario's agri-food sector, as it has historically been, is a cornerstone of our society, a major force in the province's economy, building and contributing to our high quality of life, envied around the world.

Ontario's farmers are the best environmental stewards of our farmland because they depend on that land for

their livelihood. Mr. Speaker, this is a challenging task, and farmers take it seriously each and every day. These are the people who have made sustainability their watchword and are finding new ways to reduce waste and to farm in an environmentally protective way while growing enough food to feed our province, nation and indeed the world.

Ontario farmers support their communities through youth programs and food donations to ensure our rural communities are a vibrant place to live.

As always, I want to recognize the member for Sarnia—Lambton, who came up with the idea that farmers' surplus could be donated to food banks—and get a tax credit. That's a very important initiative.

These are the people who depend on our government to invest in our infrastructure, create jobs, work with local leaders and help rural Ontario thrive.

Mr. Speaker, Ontario farmers work tirelessly to make this province great and provide us with the safest, highest-quality, most delicious foods each and every day.

Our government—your government—is proud to support Ontario farmers by creating a supportive and dynamic business climate that helps them to play a valued role in growing our economy and growing Ontario's future.

Let's give Ontario farmers our support and thanks not just here today or this week during Agriculture Week, but year-long.

Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize those 1,053 farms that are in the wonderful riding of Peterborough.

Remember to recognize and thank those who grow, harvest, or make your food when we enjoy our Thanksgiving meals this coming weekend with friends and family.

I want to remind this House to take the opportunity to give to those who don't enjoy the same privileges that you and I enjoy each and every day.

Enjoy Ontario Agriculture Week, everyone.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Responses?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It's an honour to stand today to recognize Agriculture Week. On behalf of Patrick Brown, our leader of the PC Party of Ontario, and my colleague Toby Barrett, PC critic for the agriculture, food and rural affairs file, and our entire caucus, I would like to say thank you to all farm families across Ontario.

I must say that I appreciated the overview that Minister Leal shared moments ago outlining our overall industry. It's easy to recognize how the agri-food industry in Ontario lends itself to be second, if not first, in overall economy significance. Thank you to him.

As many farmers across this province are working this week to harvest their crops for the year, we have to recognize so many contributions to Ontario by celebrating Agriculture Week.

Agriculture has been an important part of Ontario's history since before our first Lieutenant Governor, John Graves Simcoe, surveyed land for the purpose of farming homesteads for the early Loyalists who would settle in Upper Canada. These proud farmers cleared land, raised livestock, grew crops to support their families and

communities—a tradition which I am pleased to say still continues to this day in Ontario.

So important are these men and women to Ontario's economy that former PC Party MPP Bert Johnson, who proudly served from 1995 to 2003 for the riding of Perth, stood in this very House and received the support of his fellow members to officially recognize this industry through Ontario Agriculture Week.

Interjection: A great guy, Bert.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: He is, and I thank him for that. He's still a wonderful advocate for Perth county as well as our agri-food industry.

I'd also like to recognize that Local Food Week, which is now celebrated in June, serves as an excellent way to bring together the farmers who produce our food, the retailers who sell it, the restaurants that prepare it and those who enjoy it every day. Agriculture Week serves to remind us all of the value that primary agriculture and its related value-added industries bring to our province and our economy.

But we cannot simply praise without offering our support to them as well.

I found it interesting that the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, just moments ago, spoke to how farmers are constantly mastering new tools and new technology. A perfect example of this was how over the last couple of years, farmers and industry were reacting and improving their technologies and their work habits to minimize bee kills. Unfortunately, last year this Liberal government implemented a policy that will hurt Ontario farmers. Of course, I'm talking about the regulations banning neonicotinoids. As my colleague from Haldimand-Norfolk pointed out a couple of weeks ago, 28,000 members of Grain Farmers of Ontario have had to go to court to seek a stay of the regulations banning these neonicotinoids. Farmers are looking for predictable, bankable and sustainable paths forward, not knee-jerk actions that result in economic damage that is significant and irrevocable. Ontario agriculture should be a safe investment based on sound policies.

And speaking of safe, I know right now Ontario farmers have been successful in bringing in silage corn, and they're busy combining beans, following up immediately with planting winter wheat. So I just would like to respectfully remind everyone to share the roads.

To change tune a little bit, Paul Harvey's famous 1978 "So God Made a Farmer" speech was revised a couple of years ago for a Super Bowl ad, and I'd like to encourage everyone to take a moment to look up both. He opens by saying, "And on the eighth day, God looked down on his planned paradise and said, 'I need a caretaker.' So God made a farmer." From there, he invokes for the listener a scene that has changed little in almost 40 years. A powerful statement captures and shows how dedicated, hard-working, loving and selfless our farmers are: "God had to have somebody willing to ride the ruts at double speed to get the hay in ahead of the rain clouds and yet stop in midfield and race to help when he sees the first smoke from a neighbour's place. So God made a farmer."

I'd also like to recognize that not only do we need to recognize farmers, we need to recognize farm families.

It's so great to hear that Minister Leal is now on his way to participate in Advancing Women in Agriculture. It's a tremendous program, and I congratulate the planners, and I tell them today that I look forward to catching up with them later this evening.

I also will say that during the CWP outreach program, we'll be taking a look at how women have made a difference in the agri-food industry as well.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's an honour to be able to stand here today, on behalf of my leader, Andrea Horwath, and the NDP caucus, to recognize Ontario Agriculture Week.

The agri-food sector in Ontario is a \$34-billion business, second only to the auto sector—and I agree with the president of the federation of agriculture, Don McCabe, who said it's number one because you can't eat cars. It's a very good comment.

We produce in Ontario a myriad of products, from milk to bok choy and ginseng—it's 200 products, and we produce them all. We produce many of them better than anyone else in the world. We have some of the highest safety standards, the strictest regulations. Regulations aren't a bad thing if they make sense, because they assure people's safety, and we do that.

Ontario Agriculture Week is the week before Thanksgiving. I think I can speak on behalf of farmers: Farmers hope not to be celebrating Ontario Agriculture Week at receptions and at meetings, and even at a party or two, because where they want to be this week is in the field. They know that Thanksgiving is a celebration of the harvest, and they know that you can't celebrate the harvest until it's in the bin. No one knows that better than a farmer.

Probably the best feeling in the world for a farmer is a beautiful day, a bumper crop, and all your equipment is just humming. It's a beautiful feeling, Speaker, a feeling that can't be matched.

But along with those types of feelings comes the other types of feelings, where it's raining, where your crop is damaged by hail, where your animals are dying. We also know the other side, and that's why we truly do celebrate Thanksgiving. We are thankful for everything that we are able to reap off the land.

1130

I think Ontario Agriculture Week, this week, is a time when people who aren't involved in agriculture should truly sit back and thank the people—we have a huge sector, but the people we should really be thanking this week are the actual farm families: 37,000 farm families in Ontario who are involved in the basis of agriculture. They're the people right now in the combines, in the tractors with grain buggies—and if you don't know what a grain buggy is, it's nothing like a baby buggy. Those are the people. And not just the farmers but the elevator operators. Koch elevators in Earlton are open 24 hours a day. If it's combining, they're open, and so are the other elevators in my area and across the province. Those are the things we should celebrate.

Farmers have to deal with so many variables—like the weather, like animal health. What they need, where it can be achieved, is stability. They need stability from their government. I think there are several examples where they don't feel that stability is here right now. For grain farmers of Ontario to take the unprecedented step of launching legal action regarding a regulation that the government has put in regarding neonics—and not everyone agrees it was a good strategy, but it shows their frustration. They want to protect the environment. They did huge strides before the regs came in. They need to be respected. The minister said he respected the strides that farmers have been making, but some of the regs don't respect some of the professionals in agriculture, like certified crop advisers. We need more in agriculture than talk about respect; we need action on those issues.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention the Trans-Pacific Partnership that has been signed today by 12 trading countries. The devil is always in the details. For some agricultural commodities, this will be a good deal, but for some—supply management is one—the jury is still out. The devil is in the details, because one thing that supply management has always been able to achieve in this country is fair prices for consumers and farmers without government subsidization. Now, in this agreement, we're talking about compensation. That's a huge step backward. We need to look at the details and decide whether or not this is a good deal for Ontario farmers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I see a member working toward her desk with a point of order. The member from Oshawa.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on a point of order, and I'd like to take this opportunity to correct my record from September 24. It was my privilege to share a poem written by a David Lindeman in tribute to fallen workers. It was my understanding that he had passed away. However, I have heard from him, and I am pleased to correct my record. He has, in fact, not passed away and is alive and well and still advocating for fallen workers. I'm pleased to correct that record—probably not as pleased as he is that he is still alive and well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All members do have an opportunity, on a point of order, to correct their record, and I'm glad this one was able to be done on behalf of his family.

PETITIONS

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN

Mr. Bill Walker: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government's proposed Ontario Retirement Pension Plan (ORPP) is a mandatory pension plan which would target small businesses and their employees; and

“Whereas there has been little to no discussion on what the costs would be, or who would pay them; and

“Whereas affected businesses would be hit with up to \$1,643 per employee, per year in new payroll taxes starting in 2017; and

“Whereas affected employees would have up to \$1,643 per year extra deducted from their paycheques, and it would take 40 years for them to see the full pension benefits; and

“Whereas the Canadian Federation of Independent Business predicts the unemployment rate in Ontario would rise by 0.5%, and there would be a reduction in wages over the longer term; and

“Whereas all of these costs would be shouldered exclusively by small businesses and their employees; and

“Whereas public sector and big business employees who already have a pension plan will not be asked to pay into the plan;

“We, the undersigned, do not support implementation of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan and petition the government of Ontario to axe the pension tax.”

I fully support it and will send it with page Calvin.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that was signed by Mr. Michel Laurin from Chelmsford in my riding, and it goes as follows:

“Petition Regarding Gas Prices.

“Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

“Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

“Whereas five provinces and many US states already have some sort of gas price regulation; and

“Whereas jurisdictions with gas price regulation have seen an end to wild price fluctuations, a shrinking of price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices;”

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition.”

I fully support this petition and will ask Alexander to bring it to the Clerks.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, and it's entitled, “Fluoridate All Ontario Drinking Water.” It reads as follows:

"Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

"Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

"Whereas dental decay is the second-most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

"Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentrations; and

"Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the ministries of the government of Ontario adopt the number one recommendation made by the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health in a 2012 report on oral health in Ontario, and amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario."

I am pleased to add my signature to this and to support it and to send it down with page Gabriel.

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government's proposed Ontario Retirement Pension Plan ... is a mandatory pension plan which would target small businesses and their employees; and

"Whereas there has been little to no discussion on what the costs would be, or who would pay them; and

"Whereas affected businesses would be hit with up to \$1,643 per employee, per year in new payroll taxes starting in 2017; and

"Whereas affected employees would have up to \$1,643 per year extra deducted from their paycheques, and it would take 40 years for them to see the full pension benefits; and

"Whereas the Canadian Federation of Independent Business predicts the unemployment rate in Ontario would rise by 0.5%, and there would be a reduction in wages over the longer term; and

"Whereas all of these costs would be shouldered exclusively by small businesses and their employees; and

"Whereas public sector and big business employees who already have a pension plan will not be asked to pay into the plan;

"We, the undersigned, do not support implementation of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan and petition the government of Ontario to axe the pension tax."

I agree with that and will be giving it to Duha.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario signed by my neighbour, Angela Inglis:

"Privatizing Hydro One: Another Wrong Choice.

"Whereas once you privatize hydro, there's no return; and

"We'll lose billions in reliable annual revenues for schools and hospitals; and

"We'll lose our biggest economic asset and control over our energy future; and

"We'll pay higher and higher hydro bills just like what's happened elsewhere;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To stop the sale of Hydro One and make sure Ontario families benefit from owning Hydro One now and for generations to come."

I wholeheartedly support this petition and will send it to the desk with Siena.

1340

LUNG HEALTH

Mr. Arthur Potts: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children. Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

"In the Ontario Lung Association report, *Your Lungs, Your Life*, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To allow for deputations on MPP Kathryn McGarry's private member's bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario Lung Health Action Plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

"Once debated at committee, to expedite Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, through the committee stage and back to the Legislature for third and final reading; and to immediately call for a vote on Bill 41 and to seek royal assent immediately upon its passage."

I agree with this petition, sign it and leave it with page Kelly.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition that reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas accessibility of health care services is of critical importance to all Ontarians, including those living in rural areas;

"Whereas patients currently travel significant distances to access acute in-patient care, emergency, diagnostic, and surgical services available at the Huntsville District Memorial Hospital and the South Muskoka Memorial Hospital;

"Whereas the unique challenges of geography and a large population of seasonal residents currently rely on health care services provided by the current two-site model for Muskoka;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario government ensures that the current range of core hospital services provided at both the Huntsville District Memorial Hospital and the South Muskoka Memorial Hospital located in Bracebridge is maintained in the future."

I agree with this and have signed it.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Privatizing Hydro One: Another wrong choice.

"Whereas once you privatize hydro, there's no return; and

"Whereas we'll lose billions in reliable annual revenues for schools and hospitals; and

"Whereas we'll lose our biggest economic asset and control over our energy future; and

"Whereas we'll pay higher and higher hydro bills just like what's happened elsewhere;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To stop the sale of Hydro One and make sure Ontario families benefit from owning Hydro One now and for generations to come."

I couldn't agree more. I'll affix my name and will give it to page Siena to take to the table.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there are critical transportation infrastructure needs for the province;

"Whereas giving people multiple avenues for their transportation needs takes cars off the road;

"Whereas public transit increases the quality of life for Ontarians and helps the environment;

"Whereas the constituents of Orléans and east Ottawa are in need of greater transportation infrastructure;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Support the Moving Ontario Forward plan and the Ottawa LRT phase II construction, which will help address the critical transportation infrastructure needs of Orléans, east Ottawa and" our wonderful "province of Ontario."

It gives me great pleasure to support this petition and provide it to page Grace.

TAXATION

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Liberal government has indicated they plan on introducing a new carbon tax in 2015; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers have already been burdened with a health tax of \$300 to \$900 per person that doesn't necessarily go into health care, a \$2-billion smart meter program that failed to conserve energy, and households are paying almost \$700 more annually for unaffordable subsidies under the Green Energy Act; and

"Whereas a carbon tax scheme would increase the cost of everyday goods including gasoline and home heating; and

"Whereas the government continues to run unaffordable deficits without a plan to reduce spending while collecting \$30 billion more annually in tax revenues than 11 years ago; and

"Whereas the aforementioned points lead to the conclusion that the government is seeking justification to raise taxes to pay for their excessive spending, without accomplishing any concrete targets;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To abandon the idea of introducing yet another unaffordable and ineffective tax on Ontario families and businesses."

I support this petition and will send it with page Eastyn, from the great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

PRIVATISATION DES BIENS PUBLICS

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'ai une pétition qui a été signée par M^{me} Thérèse Labelle, à Val Caron, dans mon comté :

« Privatiser Hydro One : une autre mauvaise décision....

« Attendu que la privatisation d'Hydro One est un aller sans retour; et

« Attendu que nous allons perdre des centaines de millions de revenus fiables d'Hydro One pour nos écoles et nos hôpitaux; et

« Attendu que nous allons perdre le plus gros atout économique provincial et le contrôle de notre avenir dans le secteur de l'énergie; et

« Attendu que nous allons payer de plus en plus pour l'électricité, tout comme ce qui est arrivé ailleurs. »

Ils demandent à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« D'arrêter la vente d'Hydro One et de faire en sorte que les familles de l'Ontario, comme propriétaires d'Hydro One, en bénéficient, maintenant et pour les générations à venir. »

J'appuie cette pétition et je vais demander à Jacob de l'amener à la table des greffiers.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Arthur Potts: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas a growing number of Ontarians are concerned about the growth in low-wage, part-time, casual, temporary and insecure employment; and

"Whereas too many workers are not protected by the minimum standards outlined in existing employment and labour laws; and

"Whereas the Ontario government is currently engaging in a public consultation to review and improve employment and labour laws in the province;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to implement a decent work agenda by making sure that Ontario's labour and employment laws:

"—require all workers be paid a uniform, provincial minimum wage regardless of a worker's age, job or sector of employment;

"—promote full-time, permanent work with adequate hours for all those who choose it;

"—ensure part-time, temporary, casual and contract workers receive the same pay and benefits as their full-time, permanent counterparts;

"—provide at least seven (7) days of paid sick leave each year;

"—support job security for workers when companies or contracts change ownership;

"—prevent employers from downloading their responsibilities for minimum standards onto temp agencies, subcontractors or workers themselves;

"—extend minimum protections to all workers by eliminating exemptions to the laws;

"—protect workers who stand up for their rights;

"—offer proactive enforcement of laws, supported by adequate public staffing and meaningful penalties for employers who violate the law;

"—make it easier for workers to join unions; and

"—require a \$15 minimum wage for all workers."

I sign this petition and leave it with page Anna.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas an industrial wind turbine development is to be constructed approximately 3.5 kilometres west of the village of Chrysler by EDP Renewables; and

"Whereas the project will consist of 25-50 mega wind turbines and this has raised concerns by the citizens of Chrysler and surrounding area related to health, safety and property values; and

"Whereas the Green Energy Act allows wind turbine developments to bypass meaningful public input and municipal approval;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of the Environment revise the Green Energy Act to allow full public input and municipal approvals on all industrial wind farm developments, and the Minister of the Environment conduct a thorough scientific study on the health and environmental impacts of industrial wind turbines."

I agree with this petition and will pass it off to page Matthew.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that was signed by Ms. Sue Leblanc from Hanmer in my riding. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Health Sciences North is facing major budget shortfalls leading to a decrease of 87,000 hours of nursing care...;

"Whereas Ontario's provincial government has cut hospital funding in real dollar terms for the last eight years in a row; and

"Whereas these cuts will risk higher medical accident rates as nursing and direct patient care hours are reduced all across the hospital;"

We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"Stop the proposed cuts to Health Sciences North and protect beds and services.

"Increase overall hospital funding in Ontario with a plan to increase funding at least to the average of other provinces."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to this and ask my good page Jacob to bring it to the Clerk.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRENGTHENING CONSUMER
PROTECTION AND ELECTRICITY
SYSTEM OVERSIGHT ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 POUR RENFORCER
LA PROTECTION DES CONSOMMATEURS
ET LA SURVEILLANCE
DU RÉSEAU D'ÉLECTRICITÉ

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 30, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 112, An Act to amend the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010 and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 / Projet de loi 112, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2010 sur la protection des consommateurs d'énergie et la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): When we last debated this government bill, the member for Toronto–Danforth had the floor. He still has time remaining. I recognize the member for Toronto–Danforth.

1350

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. It's a pleasure to be able to complete my remarks in this second debate on this bill.

Where I had left off I had noted that there was a fundamental problem with this bill in that it was sidelining the Ontario Energy Board and setting Ontario up for a repetition of the huge problems we saw with the installation of smart meters, ensuring that the Ontario Energy Board wouldn't have the power or the authority to view the rationale and the business case for putting in new transmission lines.

If the Ontario Energy Board had the authority—and it will—to simply review the bills to see that in fact if a hydro tower is put up, it was put up at a reasonable price, that means that the Ontario Energy Board in this new regime would not actually be able to say that a transmission line was useless, was redundant, was simply a cost burden on the ratepayers of Ontario. That, Speaker, is a profound problem with this bill.

The government has put together a bill that has some elements that speak to consumer protection—that's the sugar-coating of the bill—but the critical elements that relate to the Ontario Energy Board are ones that can only bring grief to the people of this province.

The Ontario Energy Board is being diminished in its role. Even though it is being given some extra powers, its central role in controlling costs is being undermined by this government. I'll speak about that, those mechanisms of undermining, right now.

I have to say that I followed the Minister of Energy's speech on this bill. He ranged very widely. He set the goalpost. We can talk about just about anything, given what the Minister of Energy had to say. In this bill, the OEB is going to have its system of intervenor funding change. Precisely what that will be is not specified in the bill, but there is a substantial chance that the provision of funding to independent consumer advocates in the course of assessing a hearing, a proposal before the board, will be undermined.

Currently the OEB pays intervenors who appear at Ontario Energy Board hearings to represent consumer interests. The OEB doesn't use an intervenor funding model, where they pay intervenors in advance; they use a model that's intervenor cost recovery. If an intervenor brings forward information or evidence that the OEB judges to be valuable, useful and not frivolous, then that intervenor can recover their costs.

Now, there are risks with any system you use. In this system that we have now, the intervenor may not be able

to recover their cost. They may put a fair amount of money up front and that can make it very difficult for consumer groups to protect the interests of ratepayers—consumers, generally.

An approach that's used in Alberta and Newfoundland is one in which jurisdictions hire a dedicated consumer advocate to represent consumer interests. That seems to be where this government is headed. A ministerial briefing deck on Bill 112 says the new system would “take the form of an independent third party that would provide analysis on how consumers are impacted, or a more streamlined engagement process determined by the OEB.”

There was a letter put forward by the OEB in April of this year announcing phase two of its multi-year review of the intervenor framework, noting that “a number of North American jurisdictions have independent consumer advocates who are part of the regulator or separate government departments.”

We have a system now that has its problems, but we have a system now where consumer advocates, consumers themselves, can independently come forward and make their case before the Ontario Energy Board. They can question witnesses. They can question documents. They can make arguments. They are directly the consumers or advocates selected by consumers, not an advocate that is paid by the board whose continued employment is at the sufferance of the board or the pleasure of the board. We need a system in which it's very clear that consumers are not dealt out, that their voice is not silenced.

The system we have has worked reasonably well for the last 35 years or so, but I have to say to you, Speaker, that this change in support for consumer intervention at a time when the government's number one shield to the argument that rates will go up—and they will; they will go up very substantially. Their shield, their argument, is that the OEB is a regulator and it will protect us. What's happening in this bill is that a significant piece of that protection, the independent voice of consumers and consumer advocates, may well be cut out. That is a step backwards for the people of Ontario and is a risk to the rates.

I want to note another thing that this government is doing to undermine the regulator. In August 2015, the government posted a proposal to the regulations registry to change Ontario regulation 53/05, which governs how the OEB calculates rate increases with respect to the construction of nuclear projects. There are no details, but the purported aim of the proposal is “to reduce volatility in OPG's regulated nuclear rates during and following the period of Darlington refurbishments, while permitting an orderly recovery of prudently incurred costs.”

For many people with experience in cost overruns on energy mega-projects, this sounds a lot like construction-work-in-progress—CWIP—financing. Those who are familiar with this industry and with this kind of financing are very worried that the government may be creating a recipe for massive cost overruns and waste. I think it's

indicative of the lack of government respect for the regulator that, by regulation, they are trying to change whatever decision can be made by the regulator.

Ontario Power Generation proposed construction-work-in-progress financing for the Darlington refurbishment in 2010. CWIP financing allows generators to recover the costs of projects while the work is in progress, contravening a standard regulatory principle that ratepayers should only pay for electricity they are actually using, from generation projects that are “used and useful.”

Construction-work-in-progress funding forces present-day consumers to pay for energy that future consumers will use. With CWIP financing, consumers also pay in advance for planned construction that may not even take place, or pay contractors that may go out of business with the work unfinished, or pay for expenditures that may turn out to be inappropriate after the final bill is added up and after the cheques have been cashed.

CWIP financing shifts risk onto the public and reduces incentives for contractors to finish on time, or for project managers to keep a lid on costs. With nuclear projects—as you are well aware, Speaker—this risk is especially huge.

There is a good reason why construction-work-in-progress financing is illegal in most jurisdictions and the OEB has repeatedly rejected it in Ontario. Yet this government is moving to sideline the regulator which they say will defend the interests of ratepayers, so they can make a very substantial decision about how nuclear generation is financed in this province, just as in this bill they are sidelining the regulator when it comes to determining or assessing whether or not new investments in transmission infrastructure are going to be assessed for whether they are reasonable and necessary. All that will be assessed will be whether or not the bills that come in are legitimate.

A recent article in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution describes huge cost overruns and delays at the construction-work-in-progress-financed Vogtle nuclear plant in Waynesboro, Georgia. This government may use the OEB as a shield against arguments about rocketing increases in prices, but substantially, in this bill and outside it, they have been undermining that regulator.

1400

On another tack, I want to talk about section 58.1 of the bill. That's the requirement that, “A distributor that is licensed under this part to own or operate a distribution system shall maintain its head office in Ontario.”

Then it goes on to detail what that means:

“(a) the principal executive office for the distributor and its subsidiaries is located in Ontario;

“(b) the chief executive officer and substantially all of the officers with strategic decision-making or management authority for the distributor and its subsidiaries principally perform their duties at that principal executive office ... in Ontario; and

“(c) substantially all of the strategic decision-making, corporate planning, corporate finance and other executive

functions of the distributor and its subsidiaries are carried out at that principal executive office or elsewhere in Ontario.”

In fact, the new Hydro One or any of the new privatized local distribution companies or regional distribution companies that are going to arise out of the government's actions on changing the Electricity Act could maintain a small office on Toronto Street, like Conrad Black did with his firm Hollinger, where you had executive functions in one small building.

But to run a multi-billion dollar operation, you need engineers, you need IT specialists, you need people who do billing, you need people who operate call centres. Speaker, you may be aware that a few years ago, this government issued a directive to Hydro One that it could not offshore. It could not send abroad to India, China or the United States any of those functions: the call centres, the IT management, the engineering. From now on, the chief executive officer and the major executives, who can probably fill a small office building, will have to be here, but all of the back office functions can be offshored. Speaker, as you are well aware, we have people graduating every day from universities and colleges around Ontario who have the skills you need in engineering or information technology to run this system. Increasingly, what we see is a drive to offshore those services.

I had to make a call recently to a newspaper about a problem with delivery, and it was very clear from the accent that the person was operating out of a call centre in the United States.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: How do you know that?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Ma'am?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Americans move to Canada all the time.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Sometimes you ask.

Speaker, the government is setting things up for offshoring large volumes of back office functions with Hydro One and making it possible for all the small, privatized or large, recently privatized transmitters and distributors to do the same. This protection for work in Ontario is entirely inadequate.

I want to move on to the whole matter of regulating energy marketers. I know that many of us in this room have had to deal with the results of energy marketers landing on people's doorsteps, pressuring them to get into their basements to look at their meters, pressuring them to get their bills. We know the history we've had in the last decade in Ontario with people who have been taken to the cleaners by energy retailers.

I want to note that in June this year the Ontario Energy Board put out a report about energy marketers: Consumers Come First: A Report of the Ontario Energy Board on the Effectiveness of the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010. That report exposed the considerable harm that energy retailers are doing to the people of Ontario. I want to note some of their findings.

“Consumer understanding and awareness ... about the energy sector, retail energy markets” and the Electricity Consumer Protection Act is generally low, “making it

difficult for consumers to understand their choices and make valid price comparisons.” The “need for increased plain language in consumer-facing documents emerged as a common theme during the consultation process,” i.e., documents were written in a way that made it very difficult for a normal person to understand. This is not a fluke; this is not something that happens by chance. The way these companies operate is by sowing confusion and trying to put forward an identity that is very different from the one that they really do have.

The OEB noted, “Roughly one third of current residential and non-residential contract holders surveyed are unaware that they have a contract.... Importantly, 40% of unaware contract holders are consumers with a household income of less than \$40,000.”

These energy marketers prey on people with low incomes, they prey on people with less-developed English language skills, and they prey on seniors. That is the profile of the people who come to my office who have difficulties with these outfits. My guess is that, if you asked any person sitting in this Legislature representing a riding the profile of the people who came to see them about these bills, about these energy marketers, they would say the same thing: seniors, new Canadians, people on low incomes—those are the ones who are getting taken to the cleaners.

The OEB goes on to say, “A majority of residential consumers and more than 70% of non-residential consumers surveyed who entered into contracts did so with the goal of saving money.... However, our research suggests that savings are highly unlikely, at least for residential consumers, and that residential consumers with contracts have in fact paid more than consumers who bought their energy from their utility.” I’ll touch on that a bit further when I look at the comments of the Electricity Distributors Association.

According to the OEB, “Administrative penalties totalling \$2,580,000 have been levied against energy retailers since 2009 for breaches of the rules under the ECPA or the consumer protection rules that were in place earlier”—\$2.5 million; the cost of doing business for companies that operate, really, to put themselves between distributors and consumers so they can pick up the difference.

People are being taken to the cleaners. The government’s amendments are inadequate to protect the public.

My colleague from Kenora–Rainy River has brought forward a private member’s bill to outlaw these retail electricity marketers—with good reason. They take money out of people’s pockets and they give them nothing in return. On average, the Ontario Energy Board found that consumers who had signed five-year fixed-rate contracts, signed between May 2006 and November 2009, were paying 82% more for electricity than they would have paid if they stuck with their utility: “None of the electricity contracts we looked at would have resulted in more money in the residential consumer’s pocket at the end of the term.... More than eight in 10 current contract holders surveyed like having the opportunity to

enter into a retail energy contract if they want one.” The report also says, “there seems to be a disconnect between what consumers say they want and what they are actually getting.”

I found people at the door who didn’t realize that they were being taken to the cleaners, that their bill was substantially more than it would have been if they had stayed with Toronto Hydro, stayed with their local distribution company. These companies are very effective at generating in people’s minds the sense that they may well get savings. They write contracts in obscure language, as was noted by the OEB, so people don’t know exactly what’s going on. They take advantage of people in this province.

The Electricity Distributors Association represents local distribution companies across Ontario. They have an interest in this because it’s their front-line people who have to deal with frustrated customers who are paying an awful lot for electricity, much more than they would have otherwise paid. They don’t see why we should have a system in which, they calculate, \$130 million more every year is paid by ratepayers to these electricity retailers, \$130 million more than people would be paying if they just connected directly with their local distribution company. So no wonder these companies are happy to pay fines in the \$2-million, \$2.5-million or \$3-million range. At 130 million bucks a year in gross revenue, it’s a cost of doing business. It’s a minor annoyance. It’s a nuisance. But for customers, it is a substantial piece of damage.

1410

The Electricity Distributors Association supports my colleague from Kenora–Rainy River’s bill to get rid of this whole field. That’s what this bill should be doing and that’s what this bill is not doing. It allows these companies to continue their flim-flammetry, to go around telling people they’re going to save money when they are actually going to crank up their bills. There’s no good reason for that, no good reason at all.

This bill says that you can no longer get someone to sign a contract at their door. My colleague from Timmins–James Bay, a few years ago, had to deal with a situation in his riding where large numbers of people were mailed a \$30 cheque, and if they endorsed the cheque, that automatically signed them up to an energy retailer’s system. They were put on that energy retailer’s books and they were going to be paying more for power in the future, but they saw the \$30 cheque and a large number of them cashed it, automatically enrolling them in that energy retailer’s program.

These companies may or may not be useful for businesses. There may be some option out there that may offer somebody a break, but for residential customers, these programs are totally a loss, a scam, and the government should be putting an end to them.

This bill is profoundly flawed. It undermines the OEB; it undermines regulations; it doesn’t deal with the whole question of retail marketers and the damage they’re causing to Ontarians; it doesn’t protect good jobs here in

Ontario; and it opens the door to offshoring: puts very limited restrictions on what functions have to be carried out in Ontario by a transmitter or a distributor. The government should be rewriting this bill. This bill is not what Ontarians deserve.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's always a pleasure to stand and to comment on the remarks of my esteemed colleague from Toronto—Danforth.

The bill is actually about, among other things, banning door-to-door energy sales. It's not necessarily talking about smart meters. The bill is about providing the Ontario Energy Board with a bigger stick to make sure that the bad actors who want, for example, your grandmother to show them her electricity bill so that, without her really knowing what exactly has happened, she ends up as a customer of another company—something that I will say that the member did mention—and it's without her knowing what happened and without her indicating an informed consent that this bill is proposing strengthening measures to ensure that those contracts, first of all, cannot be signed at the door. If they are, the offenders are going to feel the pain.

The bill is also about enabling electricity transmission corridors and projects to get built without repeating an evaluation for a project, cutting both costs and red tape. If you're in northern Ontario, for example, and you need to get your power from the grid to your town or to your mine, this bill is going to help reduce that duplication.

It's also significant to point out with regard to the member's comments that Hydro One jobs are in Ontario and are going to remain in Ontario. That's part of the reason that two of the largest electricity sector bargaining units, the Society of Energy Professionals and the Power Workers' Union, have voted overwhelmingly in favour of the proposal to make Hydro One a publicly traded company—hardly the reaction of workers worried about having offshore employees take over their jobs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I will be up shortly to further add to the debate on behalf of our PC caucus and talk about Bill 112, An Act to amend the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010 and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998.

Obviously, all members have heard much concern about door-to-door salesmen and other issues regarding these contracts that people are often duped into signing—and I'll hit on a couple of articles that were in local newspapers back in southwestern Ontario.

I also find that as the government is talking about consumer protection and the energy system, they're obviously not talking about the impact of expensive energy on Ontario's economy: how it's impacting families, particularly seniors and those who have young kids at home, who are really having trouble in Ontario today making ends meet.

Just a couple of points quickly: The sale of Hydro One, I think everybody can agree, is going to increase the cost of electricity in Ontario.

Secondly, the current government is continuing to sign expensive energy deals with companies. In fact, the deals they're signing and have signed with wind energy in Ontario are going to cost \$60 billion over the next 20 years.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Ottawa—Orléans has uttered an unparliamentary comment. I would ask her to withdraw.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I will withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Thank you.

I'm sorry to have struck such a nerve in my two-minute hit.

I'll have more to say when I speak for 20 minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm pleased to add my comments here on Bill 112, Strengthening Consumer Protection and Electricity System Oversight Act, and to make comments on the excellent presentation by my colleague from Toronto—Danforth.

This is a pretty big bill. Obviously, we've got lots to talk about. We can see that even just in our two-minute comments we're sparking some interesting reaction.

There really are two bills here, as my colleague pointed out. The first one is the consumer protection piece that I can speak more about. That's something I think we're all on the same page about: that we want to strengthen consumer protection, and when it comes to members of the community who might be vulnerable or who might be targeted, we want to make sure they have protection.

There's also the second part of this bill, which would give the government the power to bypass the OEB and push through risky and—as I'm sure they'll be—expensive transmission projects that may or may not be in the public interest. It sounds like, especially with what my colleague said, there is a recipe here for more boondoggles, at the very least.

I'm looking forward to hearing more and learning more about this CWIP financing. That's new for me to understand, and so I hope we will have more clarifications about what the government is really intending with this—the idea of shifting risk on to the public and reducing incentives for contractors to finish on time or for project managers to keep a lid on costs. When we're talking about nuclear projects, those expenses would be astronomical.

Another point that my colleague made: Where's the protection for work in Ontario? We have three post-secondary institutions in Oshawa and graduates who are going to want to hear from this government that there are those assurances.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I'm pleased to join in the debate and offer my comments—similar to the ones from my colleague from Mississauga—Streetsville—and to comment on the speaker.

The bill is very clear about strengthening consumer protection. Every member in this Legislature would have had constituents come into their office where some door-to-door retailers of electricity and gas had duped them into signing something they did not understand. I think this is a welcome piece of legislation by the general public to ban door-to-door sales.

To be honest with you, Mr. Speaker, in my riding there are many residents for whom English is not their first language. I've had a lot of these sales to deal with, and I've had a lot cancelled over time. So I see this as something welcome in my community, and I want to say this is great for my area and I endorse it.

1420

Two members, the speaker and the member for Oshawa, commented on providing distribution service and how the OEB will not have the opportunity to approve, but basically they can review.

Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you, I sat on two committees that travelled the north, and many of our First Nations communities don't have electricity. The only thing that is holding it back is the distribution lines. If we want to encourage these communities to grow their economy, I think cabinet should be given that authority to direct the OEB in certain areas where we deem it necessary to have electricity to help build the economy in the north. It should be a welcomed venture, so I was a little disappointed with the comments on the other side because I see this as a plus, especially when electricity is supplied by utilities.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. I return to the member for Toronto—Danforth for his response.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I want to thank my colleagues from Mississauga—Streetsville, Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, Oshawa, and Scarborough—Rouge River for their comments.

This bill is part of the process of selling off Hydro One. It makes it easier for governments to get around the regulator by determining whether or not transmission projects can be built without reference to the OEB to justify its utility and its economic worthiness. That is the most critical thing people need to understand.

The second thing they need to understand is that there was huge pressure in the past at Hydro One to offshore jobs. The obstacle to that offshoring, which was a government directive to the board, has now been made void. This company will be looking for opportunities to take technical, professional jobs that aren't described in that very short list of the jobs that have to be kept in Ontario, and move them to the cheapest wage jurisdictions in the world, wherever that may be. So, Speaker,

you have to understand the guts of this bill being those things before you look at the rest.

I have to say, I was here in 2010 when we debated the Energy Consumer Protection Act, and at that time, comments were made—very similar to those made by the member from Scarborough—Rouge River—that finally we're going to get protection for consumers. We in this caucus at that time said, "This is not going to do it." Five years later, you seem to agree that there's still a problem. We said, at the time, "These people will find a way around. You have to get rid of this predatory practice." They don't seem willing to deal with predatory businesses. That's a problem, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I want to just say at the outset that I'll be sharing my time with the President of the Treasury Board, the member for Ottawa—Orléans and the member for Beaches—East York.

Speaker, I'm not an expert on energy; believe me. I find it complex, frequently difficult to understand and difficult at the best of times to figure out exactly what's going on. That having been said, in my great riding of Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale—the riding with the longest name because our people have the biggest hearts, and the biggest hopes and the biggest dreams. I hope everybody from ADFW heard that.

Interjection.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Yes. I know that about 24% of Ontario consumers rely on Hydro One for the delivery of their electrical service, and I hear a lot about Hydro One in my riding—a lot—none of it very good. A lot of people are nodding. There are many who have argued, and I haven't argued it particularly, but I've heard the arguments that what Hydro One needs is a good, strong infusion of private sector expertise. I've heard people say that those that buy into Hydro One make money not based on the price of energy going up, but on the cost of producing and delivering that energy coming down. I understand that, as someone who ran a major bookstore in my town. You didn't make money by adding 20% to your costs; you made money by cutting 20% of your costs to deliver that service. I'm pleased to say that in eight of the nine years I was in business, we did make money, unlike a lot of bookstores across the country.

So we're moving forward with Hydro One and shared ownership. That has caused a lot of confusion and some angst with people, and I understand that. When I get a chance to explain what is happening, and how I originally started out believing the same thing until I was able to talk to more people who knew a little bit more about what was happening—generally speaking, it's an issue that they're saying, "Well, we're going to wait and see what happens. The proof will be in the pudding." I think that's fair.

The member opposite who just spoke, the member from Toronto—Danforth, made the point about how all things are connected, and I believe that to be the case. It would be irresponsible to get into some of the major

changes that we're contemplating without making the related and necessary changes to better protect consumers through the Ontario Energy Board, which, as people need to know and understand, is the agency that actually sets prices, not Hydro One.

Anything that can enhance consumer protection, door-to-door or otherwise, is good. Anything that protects people is good. Enhancing the OEB's ability to levy penalties to people who are not playing by the rules is good. Reinforcing the OEB's ability to ensure reliability and continued service is good. Providing cabinet with tools to ensure that critical transmission infrastructure continues to be built is also good. All of these things are good.

We'll see how it comes out. I'm optimistic that under the leadership of our current Minister of Energy, who has a better grasp of this subject than, I think, any human being in the province of Ontario—I feel buoyed in my confidence around where we're heading, Mr. Speaker, as I sit at his feet and listen to what he is talking about. He really is a very wise man, sort of the Yoda of the electricity business. He really is that.

So I offer those comments up. I'm optimistic. I'm anxious, but I'm optimistic. I think it's going to work out. I think this offers a very good balance in terms of the whole package moving forward. I say to the folks whom I'm privileged to represent, and others in the great province of Ontario: Let's see how it works out. I'm betting it's going to work out pretty favourably.

With that, I'll sit down and yield to my colleagues, as mentioned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Deputy Premier and President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm delighted to have the opportunity to speak to this very important bill. Sometimes legislation comes before the House that might or might not have a direct impact on people. This one absolutely will have a direct impact on people.

For me, this is an important bill. It does many things to strengthen the Ontario Energy Board, but the number one reason I am so excited about this bill, and so hopeful that all members of the House will support this bill, is because for once and for all, it bans door-to-door salesmen coming to your door and convincing you to sign off to some other energy plan, taking advantage of vulnerable people, going into neighbourhoods where they know there might be a low level of literacy or a high level of people who don't speak English fluently as their first language. This will put that kind of business out of business, and I am delighted that we are doing that, Speaker.

1430

I'm sure every single member in this Legislature has had constituents come to us and say that they have been duped: They signed up; they didn't realize they'd signed up; they thought they were going to be saving money; they didn't realize how much more expensive it would be. So I really want to say to anyone who might be watching on television, what we all need to do, if people

come to your door and they ask to see your electricity bill or they ask to see your gas bill, is to tell them, then and there, "Get off my porch. Go away." Do not feel you need to be polite to these folks, because what they're doing is trying to squeeze some money out of you. I am really happy that we are eliminating this practice. We will be banning door-to-door sales for these energy companies, and it's what we should be doing as politicians. So I hope that others in this House do remember the people who have come to their offices as they are deciding how they're going to vote on this bill. I hope they do think of those people who have come begging to be relieved of these contracts they had signed without understanding the full implications of them.

This is very much one of those bills that will have an impact on people. And I would think that people in this House would have a special understanding of what happens at the door, because we, in fact, all go door to door during our election campaigns. We know that when people answer the door, they, for the most part, are polite, are interested in what you have to say. I'm going to confess, Speaker, that there may have been times when I actually got someone to put up a lawn sign when maybe they hadn't fully decided how they were going to vote. We know, because we see it, that there are people who will do—

Mrs. Cristina Martins: They're bullies.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, I wouldn't say they're bullied—I wouldn't like to think I bullied them—but they are agreeable to whatever the request is that is made of them.

Let me repeat: If somebody comes to your door and they want to see your gas bill or they want to see your electricity bill, what are we going to encourage people to say?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Get off my porch.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Get off my porch. Go away. Goodbye.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Ottawa—Orléans.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Je suis très fière de me lever aujourd'hui et d'apporter ma voix sur ce projet de loi on behalf of the residents of my riding of Ottawa—Orléans. Bill 112, Strengthening Consumer Protection and Electricity System Oversight Act will be beneficial for Ontarians and many of the constituents in my riding of Ottawa—Orléans.

I think some of my colleagues have highlighted very important points. I must say that this bill, if it passes, would ban, as mentioned, the door-to-door sales of energy contracts. This is something I had heard as a previous business owner managing a retirement residence. A lot of our seniors sometimes are vulnerable. When someone goes to their door or gives them a call, they assume it is a legitimate individual who goes to see them. It is certainly very important for me that once we bring this bill forward, it pass, and I hope the members of the opposition will consider how important it is to protect our most vulnerable in Ontario, and certainly in my

community of Ottawa–Orléans. So banning the door-to-door sales of energy contracts will remove those aggressive sales tactics and give people an ability to better consider the decision to sign an energy contract.

I look at this bill also and I want to make sure, Mr. Speaker, that the people who are watching this debate will also understand that it will be extending the cooling-off period for energy contracts from 10 to 20 days in which we can cancel a contract without a penalty.

This legislation enhances consumer protection in other areas of the sector and is part of the long-term goals of the government as laid out in the long-term energy plan. We are taking the proper steps towards protecting consumers, and we will continue to do so.

On this side of the House, we fully understand the importance of investing in infrastructure renewal, and this includes energy infrastructure. That is why it is so important that this bill pass. The legislation will strengthen the Ontario Energy Board's ability to take cabinet's decision on identifying priority projects, and these priority projects will be streamlined once identified by cabinet, allowing for faster energy infrastructure renewals across Ontario.

These energy renewals have a significant impact on my riding. This issue is very important to me and to constituents, given that in Ottawa we do have very harsh winters. We also unfortunately have those days where a deep freeze comes, and freezing rain, and it sometimes damages our lines. We at times have experienced those types of outages, and I'm sure many people have gone through winter outages and understand what it is to be without power.

We understand this, and this is why the Ontario Energy Board will, if this bill passes, be given extra tools to ensure that transmission companies continue to deliver hydro in the event of an emergency. By extending the Ontario Energy Board's emergency powers to transmission companies, we will ensure that fewer Ontarians experience service disruptions in emergency situations. I have to say, Mr. Speaker, as a former business owner of a retirement residence, there's nothing worse than not having power for our seniors.

These changes to consumer protection and to the Ontario Energy Board are needed. Ontarians have told us that we need to ban door-to-door sales, and we will be doing just that. We will be adding further consumer protection in regards to energy contracts, and the OEB will be expanding consumer representation in hearings. All of these changes and enhancing the OEB's emergency powers for transmission will be to the benefit of Ontarians, and we'll be one step forward towards our goal of our long-term energy plan.

It gives me great pleasure to pass to my dear friend from Beaches–East York to continue this debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnett): The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you to the government whip for her very kind passage of this debate over to me, just passing the baton.

We've heard some tremendous information already about the importance of contracts and at-the-door salespeople, and I'll maybe talk a little bit about that, but I think it's important to put in context the history of where we are with this bill. In 2010, when we first came out with the Energy Consumer Protection Act, we put a bunch of measures in place which were designed to protect consumers against aggressive sales tactics and other such measures. Four years later, in 2014, the Minister of Energy—of course, that was before my time in the House, but it was a time where the minister said, "Let's take a look and review what the Energy Consumer Protection Act is doing. Are there areas where we can improve on consumer protection in order to make the work of that group even better?"

It's interesting as a backdrop to realize how many fewer complaints there were under energy supply as a result of the 2010 amendments and changes that were made. The system was working, but there were certain areas that maybe needed to be tweaked, hence why the Minister of Energy went forward in 2014 with the review. Now what we're seeing is the effect of the recommendations that are coming out of that review in terms of these new protections in the act.

My sister bought a new house in an area not far from where I live—my sister Diana Potts, a wonderful woman. She's the meat, the glue that keeps our family together. I was helping her move in the day of her moving in, and on her move-in day, while she was all upset and frantic and "This goes here," an energy retailer came to her door. I wasn't around at that particular time, but later in the day she said, "I didn't know what to do. But look, I've got a whole new energy contract for my house here, and I'm going to get a brand new, shiny gas water heater."

I was a little cautious about what she had signed, and I went down to look. They were going to replace a water heater that was a year and a half old. They had got a hold of the bill, and—you know, to show up at someone's door in the midst of a move is obviously the kind of tactics we want to get away from.

1440

But we have to understand that the bill strikes a balance with the ability of third-market retailers to still do their marketing door to door; they just can't sign contracts there. If they want to sign a contract, there's another mechanism to go on. They can sign contracts online, through the Internet, but you still know that's a consumer who's actually making the effort to go to a place because they want to try to take advantage of the benefits.

Those of us who are gamblers in the House—and I'm sure there are many—know that the house always wins. So sometimes, with respect to these contracts, you're taking that kind of a gamble: Are the rates going to go up? Do you get a fixed rate? So people can make those decisions online, but as our government whip told us, they now have 20 days, if this bill passes, and then 10 days to reflect on it and maybe change. So that's really important.

I also want to talk a little bit about how important the changes that we're making to the OEB are, particularly around decisions where the government wants to maintain control over new hydro transmission infrastructure.

Interjection.

Mr. Arthur Potts: That's exactly the point; thank you to the member, because we are retaining that direction and control. In the context of this whole debate about broadening the ownership of Hydro One, we are seeing once again how it's the OEB that provides the protective measures that we need, both in terms of rate increases and in terms of major development decisions of where transmission lines go. This isn't only to protect against critical transmission infrastructure in the areas that are covered by Hydro One, but this goes to every other LDC in the province—municipally owned, privately owned, jointly owned. It's so important that the OEB continues to have that, so we're providing the OEB with additional measures of protection.

Many of us saw the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada last week, which very clearly—at the Supreme Court of Canada level—upheld the right of the OEB to do the reviews necessary, question the kinds of expenses that were going onto the books of the LDC—of Hydro One, in that case—and question how they were going to pass those costs on to the ratepayers. The court was absolutely crystal clear in upholding the powers of the OEB. What you're seeing here now are even greater strengths that the OEB will have.

I keep telling my people in my riding of Beaches—East York all the time about the misinformation that's being spread by people all over this province that hydro rates are going to increase dramatically as a result of broadening the ownership. What we know is that the OEB—so the decision to broaden the ownership has absolutely nothing to do with the potential increased interest rates on generation capacity, because they're not generators. They are transmitters, and they're the local customer delivery agent.

What we are going to see in a broadening is the chance for a board of management, under new private sector discipline, to provide the services more effectively and more efficiently. The opportunity will come when they go back before the board. If the board thinks they're doing such a good job, being so much more efficient, there will be downward pressures on transmission rates in this province, which will reduce the bills for all our friends in rural Ontario, which will potentially reduce bills for people—providing that service to Toronto Hydro, for instance.

This is a good piece of legislation, and I look forward to all of your support.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm glad to be able to stand and have a two-minute comment regarding the speakers we had earlier, in the past 10 minutes, with the government.

The first speaker definitely talked about how he thinks things are going to be good at the end of the day and to

trust the minister to go forth with the sale of Hydro One. It's hard to sell when 80% of the people of Ontario are against the sale to start with. This government has removed the Ombudsman from overseeing what's going on at Hydro One after a scathing report that this government failed in its delivery of hydro to this province.

When you look at, let alone the billings—I had a constituent of mine who had a bill for over \$200,000 a few years ago: a mistake by Hydro One, but you can imagine the terrifying news when she opened up her bill and saw this bill, knowing that this big corporation, run by the Liberal government, was causing this undue hardship. And it's across the province that you hear that. But the fact that the Ombudsman is moved away—now it's all in secrecy, this reported sale. The first step they do is they hire a CEO for \$4 million a year. I would think, as an average Ontarian, looking at what's going on with the sale of Hydro One—and for the first speaker to actually say, "Trust them"—I think I'd be quaking in my boots, as an average Ontarian, to see where Hydro's going to go.

The last speaker was talking about how hydro was going to go down, but their own long-term energy report is already claiming that hydro rates are going up 40% in the next few years already, without even discussing Hydro One. For him to say, "Your rates are going to go down in rural Ontario"—the other part of the hydro bill is going up 40%—I think, is ridiculous.

If you look at rural Ontario, you just have to look in my riding for what you guys have done. Since 2008, this Liberal government's policies have scared off 6,000 manufacturing jobs from my riding alone. We need to be able to be competitive. One of the best ways to be competitive is with our energy rates. You have made a mess of the energy system.

You can have this bill, where the Treasury Board president is saying that all salespeople are evil and they're out to get you, but I do have to say, at the end of the day—next election, 2018, you will hear at the door, to any Liberal candidate, "Get off my porch. Quit squeezing money out of me."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: As always, I'm glad to be able to add my two cents, or two minutes, to the debate. I appreciated the comments from our Liberal counterparts, first from the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. As he said, "Anything that protects people is good." While I'm inclined to agree with that, I think our job here in the House is to make sure it isn't just good, but that it's good enough, that it's the right good.

In fairness, as my colleague from Toronto—Danforth pointed out, back in 2010 when they were debating consumer protection, they thought it was good, but as we stand here now, perhaps it wasn't good enough. I think it's up to us to ensure that that is, indeed, the case. As he said, "We'll see how it comes out." Well, I'd like more assurance than that. In fact, Minister, in your own words, you're betting it's going to work out pretty favourably. I hope you are right, but I would ask that we not—

Mr. Arthur Potts: Trust me.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Please don't yell at me to trust you.

Please stop gambling with our affordability or our utilities, our job security and our services.

Also, oddly enough, we heard the Minister of Energy referred to as Yoda, with his presentations about energy. While I may not be at the cabinet table and I can't possibly imagine those conversations, I appreciate hearing from this minister that it's much like he's channelling Yoda. So I will give it right back to you and quote Yoda, which I wouldn't have thought I'd have the opportunity to do here in the Legislature: "Remember Jedi strength flows from the Force. But beware. Anger, fear, aggression. The dark side they are. Once you start down the dark path, forever it will dominate your destiny."

Please keep the lights on. Please don't sell off Hydro One. And, "Mind what you have learned. Save you it can."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: It is my pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 112, the Strengthening Consumer Protection and Electricity System Oversight Act. I want to tell you that this bill is really important because it does some things that are key to this province. Essentially, it answers the calls we've been hearing for some time from consumers out there. What this bill is attempting to do, and proposes to do, is strengthen the ability to deliver energy to consumers out there and make sure that we are protecting them.

What we are going to do is a couple of things. We are doing this by strengthening the Ontario Energy Board Act and making sure that the enhancements include banning door-to-door sales. We have been hearing for years from consumers that aggressive people come to the door at times and make life difficult for some of our friends and neighbours. This bill is going to try to ensure that that doesn't happen anymore.

In addition, it is going to give consumers a direct voice in OEB proceedings. That means giving people out there—regular folks—a chance to have their say when they need to have their say. It's also going to be reinforcing the OEB's ability to ensure reliability and continuity of service to all customers in the event of a failing transmitter or distributor. Imagine how important that is when it comes to energy.

1450

These are just some of the things that this bill is trying to do, but it's really about protecting Ontario consumers and giving regular folks out there, like my neighbours, a stronger voice and making sure that, when we need to, OEB will have the ability to institute stronger compliance, ensure reliability, and bring in oversight practices that will ensure that we are consolidating activities, and enabling the OEB to give consumers, as I said, a stronger voice in hearings and proceedings.

Most importantly, I do want to address what the member opposite said. He said we made a mess of the energy

system. I just want to say to the MPP for Elgin–Middlesex–London that I remember when brownouts were happening. I remember when the lines were held together by tape and glue. And when we came in—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Questions or comments?

One of the government members has the opportunity now to reply.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I'd be happy to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I'm absolutely shocked, Mr. Speaker, that the members opposite didn't have a second minute that they wanted to reply. Maybe they've said all they need to say on this bill—and that's a good thing.

I would like to start by saying that it's as if the members of the opposition party want to have it both ways. They talk about the Ombudsman report and the scathing—I think he used the word "scathing"—indictment of that business. Then they're upset that we're trying to privatize part of it, to broaden the ownership so we can provide private sector discipline to its operations and make it a much more consumer-friendly organization. You can't have it both ways. If you believe what the Ombudsman had to say about what a badly run organization it is, you should welcome this opportunity we're doing here.

I also want to comment on what the member from Oshawa had to say. It's always a pleasure, listening to her. She brought in this wonderful Star Wars analogy, and Yoda, and the cautions—

Interjection.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Oh, the minister too? Well, I wasn't here for that part of the speech, but thanks for raising that.

I would like to bring in my own cinematic reference, if I may, Mr. Speaker. It's as if the third party has reached into this Hydro One opportunity as a precious little ring in Lord of the Rings. It's their little precious, Speaker. By all accounts, they will defend it against all odds, and for what purposes?

The reality is, this bill demonstrates that we will have an opportunity at the OEB to strengthen and protect consumers in a way that wasn't being done before. Speaker, the transmission costs that I spoke about very clearly—the member wanted to take it out of context. It's not about what the generation rates will be; on the transmission side, which is what Hydro One is responsible for, it's going to have downward pressures because it will be a better-run organization, and you all know it. We look forward to your support so we can move this thing forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak this afternoon to Bill 112, the Strengthening Consumer Protection and Electricity System Oversight Act, although I can't really believe we're looking at a bill with that title, which was intro-

duced by this Liberal government, in light of the energy policies that they've brought forward—in fact, many have said the “disgraceful Liberal energy policies and decisions”—that we've seen here in Ontario over the last 12 years. I could speak for the entire 20 minutes about how ironic that is, and why.

To begin with, there is the unprecedented letter warning about poor decisions by this government on oversight in the electricity system, signed by the Information and Privacy Commissioner, the French Language Services Commissioner, the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, the Financial Accountability Officer, the Auditor General, the Ombudsman, the Environmental Commissioner and the Integrity Commissioner.

Then there are the industrial wind turbines that are being forced on rural Ontario without their consent and which are proving to be an environmentally detrimental and expensive foray by this Liberal government—not to mention, as several others have this afternoon, that this government has blindsided ratepayers with the fire sale of Hydro One. But I suppose we should take this as proof that better oversight is desperately needed, so any movement in that direction is good to see.

The philosophy of the bill itself is not something that we, as the PC caucus, disagree with, although there are certainly aspects that need improvement. As our very qualified PC energy critic has indicated in his leadoff remarks, our caucus will be supporting this bill. This is a government bill in a majority government, so I think we can safely assume it will find its way to committee. I hope that at that stage, the government will take seriously the concerns being raised on this side of the House and work with the opposition to improve Bill 112.

The Ontario energy market has become extremely complex. Our electricity system is owned and operated by public, private and municipal corporations. It is difficult to navigate for families and small businesses who are trying to understand what their options are, how they can bring their energy costs down, and who they can appeal to when they have a problem.

The ban on door-to-door sales of energy contracts is a very positive element of this bill. While this is much less of a problem than it once was, stopping the practice altogether is for the best. The industry is supportive of these changes, I believe, and I'm sure every member here has had to help a constituent try to get out of one of those horrible contracts and understands how problematic they actually are. They take advantage of people who are struggling to pay their bills as it is and who often don't understand the implications of what they're signing.

One type of contract, in particular, is causing huge problems across this province and especially in my riding. The salespeople who descended on Lambton-Kent-Middlesex communities and families on behalf of the wind energy companies and who went door to door in the municipalities trying to sign farmers to wind leases have wreaked havoc on our rural communities. The repercussions of these contracts, which were signed, in many cases, before the farmers fully understood what

they entailed, are being felt today and will be felt long into the future. Thousands of acres of prime farmland—the best our country has to offer—will never again grow food for the people of this province because of the environmental impact of these industrial wind turbines.

Wind companies employ lawyers to put together intensely complex leases that are 50 pages or more long and which favour the wind company in everything. These contracts are brought to farmers by unlicensed, unregulated persons who are well-versed in the art of closing a deal. I have heard of cases of negotiations going on until 3 a.m., with these representatives working every advantage and pressuring farmers to sign these leases. We have seen how this has pitted families against families and communities against communities. The check and balance to this type of exploitation was municipal oversight, but this Liberal government did away with that, stripping rural communities of their authority to accept or reject industrial wind turbines to clear the way for wind energy companies to turn up at people's doorsteps and do whatever was necessary to close the deal.

Now, I hope this bill in its final form will look out for farmers who have seen their farmland destroyed by the pouring of hundreds and hundreds of metric tonnes of concrete for each turbine that is erected, not to mention the conflict generated within communities that have to live with the decisions made by individual farmers who were pressured and wooed at their doorstep to allow a company to put a turbine on their property. People don't generally blame the farmers in these situations; even the most ardent anti-turbine advocates realize that many farmers were induced to sign bad contracts.

I wish the zealous attitude this government now has toward protecting people from these types of contracts had extended to the implementation of the Green Energy Act and the thousands of contracts that were signed in its wake. These contracts that may not be in their long-term interest are exactly the sort of issue that needs to be addressed in a bill about strengthening consumer protection in the energy sector. But in that case, instead of trying to solve the problem, the government decided to subsidize it.

Yes, protections are needed, but as my colleague the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke has pointed out, this bill is too far-reaching. The 20-day cooling-off period for energy products is fine for the type of contracts I was talking about, but it is completely unreasonable for other energy products. It's excessive and unrealistic. If someone wants to purchase something to help conserve energy and they go visit a website to find a product that suits their individual needs, this bill proposes that the government should prevent that purchase for 20 days. It's a great talking point to say that the 20-day cooling-off period is robust consumer protection, but when we actually pause for a moment to consider the real repercussions of this measure, it's clear this is a case of the nanny state and the government thinking the people of this province can't make decisions for themselves. We

can't use the idea of protecting people as an excuse to run their lives.

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Even in *Consumers Come First*, a review of Part II of the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010, a report put together by the OEB, it's made clear that consumers want to have choice. Consumers who have an energy contract, who formerly had a contract, or who have never had one, all agree that they want the right to enter into a retail energy contract if they want one. That certainly needs to be respected, Mr. Speaker. If someone wants to go online and buy a thermostat to help regulate their energy consumption, we need to get out of their way.

I have calls coming into my office all the time from people who simply cannot afford to pay their hydro bill. I think all MPPs—in fact, I know that all MPPs in this House have heard the same from constituents in their own ridings. These people are afraid they won't be able to have heat or lights through the winter, or that keeping the power on will mean they can't buy their kids shoes or feed them breakfast.

The cost of electricity for the average Ontario consumer has jumped by more than \$1,000 from the day that Dalton McGuinty was elected Premier until today, and it is only going to keep getting worse. This government is raising hydro rates by 42% over the next five years, and now they want to throw up barriers to people seeking some sort of solution.

Inflation in this province is about 1.2%, while energy prices have tripled. The price of energy is so far out of whack, it almost makes any other discussion about harm reduction in this sector seem laughable. Don't get me wrong: People need all the help they can get when it comes to their hydro bills, but more often than not, this government is aggravating the problem rather than offering a remedy.

This bill would impede the delivery services and the purchase of products which are in no way comparable to the energy contracts that are the actual real problem. If alternative and innovative products are being brought to market, potentially by companies right here in the province of Ontario, we need to support a process that gives consumers fair access, especially when it comes to products that are intended to help bring hydro bills down and conserve electricity, because that's what is best for Ontario families and our environment.

There needs to be changes made to this bill to refocus the target of this blanket 20-day period so that it reflects what the real problems actually are. Limiting consumer choice in energy conservation products, which I assume is a sector that is going to be experiencing skyrocketing demand as hydro bills continue to rise in Ontario, is not protecting consumers; it's actually hurting them.

We would love to see the other side of the House, the government, putting forward something that would bring electricity costs down rather than driving costs up. It should be said that if the people of this province had a government that could provide access to affordable electricity, there wouldn't be demand for these energy

contracts. You can certainly understand how someone would be lured into signing a sketchy contract or buying a questionable product, when they face month after month after month of high and ever-rising hydro bills. They have been driven to desperation by this government and their disgraceful energy policies, so when someone shows up at their door or puts up a website offering a chance to get their hydro bills under control, they jump at the chance.

While it's good that this government is trying to solve the problem of unscrupulous business practices surrounding energy products, I think it should be acknowledged that this government did a lot to create this problem in the first place, and these contracts wouldn't be as financially devastating if energy costs weren't so high to begin with. It's a classic case of "government is not the solution to our problem; government is the problem."

I think this bill also overreaches by mandating that you cannot pay an agent a commission for selling a product. Commission is far from unique to the energy sector. Rewarding high-achieving salespeople is a perfectly legitimate business practice used by companies that sell \$10 T-shirts, all the way up to real estate agents who collect commissions on purchases worth millions of dollars. Banning commissions in this sector does far more to handcuff companies than it does to actually protect consumers.

I come from a retail business background, Mr. Speaker, so I know that most of the time, the people who are best at selling, who have moved more product out the door, are the most helpful, knowledgeable and personable. It's not because they trick or pressure customers into buying. In many cases, commissions can lead to a better experience for customers. We're taking measures to inhibit unscrupulous business practices, such as banning door-to-door sales, which make it unnecessary to take this further step of forbidding companies from rewarding hard work.

I don't see how this government, the Liberal government, can be comfortable handing out Pan Am bonuses worth millions of dollars, when we don't even know the final numbers on what these executives delivered, but then turn around and tell energy companies that they must pay a flat salary to their employees regardless of performance. I guess they're consistent, though; they don't think what you get paid should have anything to do with what you actually accomplish.

The Minister of Energy and his parliamentary assistant focused in their remarks on this bill on "empowering the Ontario Energy Board" and enhancing the OEB's capabilities in core areas. For example, this bill will allow the OEB to develop an agreement with the Electrical Safety Authority with regard to the provision of sharing documents, records and information.

It would also allow the OEB to authorize a transmitter or distributor to carry on a business activity other than transmitting or distributing electricity directly. I hope that this government has learned from Ornge when it comes to government agencies seeking out new opportunities

for business activities. That's wisdom that should be passed along to the OEB.

What I would like to know more about is what safeguards and conditions will be in place to ensure that these decisions are made in the best interests of the people of Ontario. Less than a year ago, we all remember hearing from the Auditor General that neither the Ministry of Energy nor the Ontario Energy Board did a cost-benefit analysis of smart meters before plunging ahead with that program.

As we all know, smart meters were first estimated in 2005 to cost \$1 billion, though the final price tag was much, much higher. This was a major project, a serious investment of taxpayer dollars. Given the disastrous results of the smart meters, it's clear the stakes were very high, yet the OEB, which is supposed to protect ratepayers, didn't bother doing a cost-benefit analysis until after the commitment to implementation had been made. It makes me wonder if the energy minister, the ministry and this government are also failing once again to do a cost-benefit analysis as they sell off Hydro One and hand off new powers to the OEB, which so recently failed taxpayers with smart meters.

I would like to know what is going to be different. What is actually going to change? The mandate of the OEB is to protect ratepayers. That was clearly not top of mind when it came, as I said, to smart meters. In fact, the minister spent a good deal of his leadoff on this bill talking about the fire sale of Hydro One, which the Auditor General has warned this government about because it gets rid of the oversight that allowed the failure of the smart meter program to come to light.

The Auditor General also analyzed the data that has shown that between 2006 and 2015, the Green Energy Act and the global adjustment have cost Ontario's energy consumers \$50 billion. These are shortfalls in the electricity system that are going to have to be paid for. When the OEB sets the rates, they will be aware of what the provincial ledger looks like. This government is creating an untenable financial situation in our energy sector for which taxpayers are on the hook.

I would also like to hear more from the minister on the enhanced powers for cabinet to expedite the creation of transmission infrastructure. The act includes a mechanism that would allow for cabinet to designate the construction of key transmission corridors as a needed priority. Is there a guideline or other criteria for what qualifies a project for getting fast-tracked? Will this be a transparent process that won't leave our municipalities guessing why their project may have been bumped down the list? Transparency has been sadly missing with this government. I hope that we will see measures taken to ensure that cabinet is impartial and fair with what projects they choose to expedite, and that this can actually be verified.

My colleague from Perth-Wellington has a timely motion before this House which calls for the government to guarantee that government-held ridings and opposition-held ridings be given equal and transparent

consideration on infrastructure funding. That's a philosophy that should be applied to the expediting of projects as well as their funding, and I'd like to commend my colleague Mr. Pettapiece from Perth-Wellington.

I think this bill, though, is on the right track by requiring the Ontario Energy Board to establish a process where the interests of consumers can be represented in proceedings before the OEB. I'm shocked that such a measure wasn't already in place, when the interests of consumers should be at the forefront of an organization that is funded by and is intended to protect consumers in Ontario. As I've said, ratepayers in this province need all the help they can get.

1510

This is a small step in the right direction by a government that has been sprinting in the wrong direction for 12 years and, quite frankly, not changing course and not making decisions that are going to make life more affordable for families and businesses in the province of Ontario. If this government really wants to protect consumers, I would suggest getting hydro prices under control so they can afford heat and light without having to sacrifice other necessities.

Mr. Speaker, we need a government that makes Ontario great again, a government that reins in wasteful spending, lowers taxes on families, makes energy affordable and creates conditions for good jobs to return to our province.

We need an economic plan for the future of Ontario. The Liberal government has made intentional decisions to drive Ontario and our great people down. This is not the Ontario I want for my child. Let's pass legislation to create hope and opportunity again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Again, I'm pleased to rise and make comments on the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex and his thoughtful comments on Bill 112, the Strengthening Consumer Protection and Electricity System Oversight Act. I think we've had some lively debate so far today and I know that that's just beginning, because when we're talking about protecting members of the public, that's an important topic.

One of the things I thought was interesting that the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex had brought up is that I think everyone in this House can understand how people can be lured into those sketchy contracts, as he put it, that members of the public are struggling to pay their bills, to budget for life, for surprises, to just manage in their everyday day-to-day. They're always looking for a way to keep costs down, to stretch that dollar that little bit further, and so when someone comes and knocks on your door and says, "Hey, I've got a great way for you to save some money, because your bills are going through the roof," there isn't anyone who wouldn't want to trust that opportunity. So I think this is very important, that we've got a bill before us that endeavours to stop that practice. But as the member had pointed out, this government did a lot to sort of create this mess in the first place.

I appreciate his reminding us about Pan Am bonuses. I thought it was an interesting comment, that perhaps we're seeing that what you get paid doesn't necessarily have anything to do with the work you do, and I hope that that's not the case. Anyway, just to repeat that thought.

I would also echo his question, "What safeguards are in place to ensure that decisions are being made in the best interests of Ontarians?" As this debate unfolds, I hope that government will make that clear to us and to Ontarians, because, as he said, transparency is lacking. Imagine how much we can't see now. Imagine how little we'll be able to see when we can't afford to keep the lights on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I'm pleased that our government is committed to putting energy consumers first and putting into place legislation that protects consumers. So it gives me pleasure to stand up in this House this afternoon to speak to Bill 112, the Strengthening Consumer Protection and Electricity System Oversight Act.

Bill 112 proposes legislative enhancements to the Ontario Energy Board Act and the Energy Consumer Protection Act. If passed, one of the many enhancements this bill will provide is an increase in consumer protection by amending the Energy Consumer Protection Act, including banning door-to-door sales of retail electricity and gas contracts.

I'm very proud to represent a riding like Davenport that is so diverse, a riding that is home to many newcomers from many different countries who do not have English as their first language, and a riding that is home to so many seniors who, too, do not have English as their first language. Many of these newcomers and seniors, but especially the seniors, have contacted my office numerous times as victims of aggressive sales tactics at the doorsteps of their home. As the member from Toronto-Danforth said earlier, it is the newcomers and low-income families that are being taken to the cleaners. I couldn't agree more. It is these vulnerable people that we need to protect.

The protection of Ontario's energy consumers is a top priority, and that is why our government introduced the Energy Consumer Protection Act in 2010. Yes, we have seen, since 2011, the number of complaints against retailers significantly decrease, but more needs to be done.

The passing of this bill would provide the type of protection that my constituents in Davenport need, that those of Toronto-Danforth need, and that all Ontarians across this province need, to be protected against aggressive door-to-door sales practices and to be protected from being taken to the cleaners.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions or comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: I noted that my colleague from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex left about a minute and 39, so I was wondering if I could have his extra time, because I've got a lot to say here.

It's a pleasure to hear his comments in regard to this bill, the consumer protection act and oversight. He and his family have been long-time owners of a Home Hardware franchise. I believe they have to go to their consumers and tell the truth right off the bat, or they wouldn't be in business for the many years that they have been.

I've listened intently all day to the debate in this House, and I'm going to talk a little bit about some of the oversight, the smart meters and the hydro prices under control that he was talking about.

This government has allowed our energy sector to fall through the cracks big time. We're paying the highest rates in North America. It's great, in some ways, that we're going to have some protection for consumers. I certainly support those, and as he said, we'll be supporting this bill. But there needs to be a lot more, and we should be focusing on the bigger picture of hydro.

Earlier in the debate, I believe the minister responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy, the President of the Treasury Board, and the Deputy Premier made a comment about "Get off my porch." I'm going to quote that: "Get off my porch." Well, I trust that had they gone to the electorate and said they were going to do a fire sale of Hydro One, they'd have heard a lot of "Get off my porch." I think the next time, if they go through with this, when 80% of the taxpayers say, "Do not do that," they will hear, "Get off my porch."

We are here to ensure that there's legislation truly to protect. One of the key things they did in the most recent time was they actually removed the Ombudsman—the removal of accountability and oversight—and yet they actually bring in bills saying, "We're going to protect the consumer." I see just the opposite there, if you will. They're saying one thing and doing another.

In this case, they're horrible contracts. There have been a lot of horrible contracts, such as the Green Energy Act, under this government, and the fire sale of Hydro One will be an equally horrible contract if they prevail without listening to Ontarians, who truly want to ensure that we have the province, the services and the programs that we deserve.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Protecting the public: There is no greater need, be it on the phone or at the door.

Let me tell you a story, not directly related to what the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex had to say.

My mom will be 92 in a couple of months. A couple of years ago, her phone rings, and there's a voice on the other end and the voice says, "Hi. Do you know who this is?" My mom says, "No," and she says, "Your granddaughter."

"Oh, Lacey?" She took a guess.

"Yeah, yeah, that's me. I didn't know if you'd recognize me. I've got a sore throat and a cold. Listen, I'm in trouble. I'm in Montreal. I've had an accident. I'm going to be in jail for a while. I need bail money, but don't tell Mom and Dad, because I'm really embarrassed by it. Can you go to the bank and send me some money?"

My mom is 90 years old. So she goes and sends a couple of thousand dollars. The phone rings the next day, and they want another couple of thousand dollars, only this time, "Go to the post office and get it in money orders."

My mom goes to the post office, but there's a new person working there, and she couldn't get the money orders, so she goes back to the bank. But then the guy from Wells Fargo calls, doing a security check, and says, "Mrs. Hatfield, what's going on? Why do you need this money?"

Mom says, "I can't tell you. They told me not to tell."

And buddy says, "Any time they tell you not to tell your son or your daughter, that's the time you"—so I get the phone call. My mom says, "Is Lacey there?" and I say, "No."

She says, "Oh, it must be true," and I say, "What do you mean, 'must be true'?"

"She's in Montreal, in a car accident."

I say, "She's gone to Mac's Milk. She just left two minutes ago."

Anyway, we put a stop on the second. My mom was out \$2,000; we put a stop on it. But there are people out there who will go after the 90-year-olds and the most vulnerable in society and take advantage. That's why this bill—be it at the door or on the phone or whatever, we must do whatever we can to clamp down on the people that will do this sort of thing.

1520

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

We had our four questions and comments; I apologize. The member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex can reply now.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'd like to thank the member from Oshawa, Davenport, my colleague from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, to whom I must give \$5 afterwards because he gave a shout-out to Home Hardware—thanks for that—and also the member from Windsor-Tecumseh, who I think told a very compelling story. It's one that, growing up in the hardware and lumber supply business, we heard many times, with elderly people being taken advantage of, so it does happen all the time.

Of course, as our critic for the PC Party for the portfolio of energy said, we will be supporting Bill 112 and would like to further strengthen this bill at committee.

I said in the beginning that there has been a number of media stories about consumers being taken advantage of. I've got a couple here, just local stories, one in particular from the London Free Press talking about people being taken advantage of by door-to-door salespeople, especially in the energy sector.

I would like to get on the record just one more time: I dedicated a lot of my remarks to the fact that these farmers and families in my riding and across rural Ontario really are being taken advantage of by wind turbine companies. They were sold a bill of goods, and the government really needs to listen and realize that a lot of these families and farmers have been put in a really tough position by some of the leases that have been signed.

When we're talking about strengthening consumer protection, that's one area I'd like to see at committee that this bill be strengthened.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm very pleased to rise today on behalf of the constituents that I represent in London West to join the debate on Bill 112, An Act to amend the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010 and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998.

This is the long title of the bill—the official title of the bill. I am referring to the bill deliberately by that official title because I think it captures much more accurately what this bill is all about. It really reflects the intention of this legislation, which is to amend these two separate acts in two very different ways. That is much different from what the government would like to present as the intention of this legislation when they refer to it as the Strengthening Consumer Protection and Electricity System Oversight Act.

As I mentioned, the official title clarifies that Bill 112 is actually two very different bills, and only the first part of Bill 112 has really anything to do with consumer protection. The second part of the bill, which includes amendments to the Ontario Energy Board, or the OEB, really does nothing to protect consumers. In fact, the amendments that are proposed in Bill 112 will do the exact opposite. They will undermine consumer protections by eroding the power of the Ontario Energy Board to review and regulate large-scale electricity transmission and distribution projects that are deemed by the government as priority projects. This will give the government the ability to exempt projects like the privatization of Hydro One. We have all heard from constituents that Ontarians feel that they have a right to be part of the decision-making on that incredibly valuable asset, but of course that will be exempted under this legislation.

This is the fire sale of one of Ontario's most treasured public assets, and we believe strongly that it deserves scrutiny and that the OEB should have the mandate to review this decision and this direction from the Liberal government and determine whether it is indeed in the public interest. We have heard a resounding consensus that Ontarians do not believe that it is in the public interest, and they have yet to see any evidence from the government that would suggest that it is.

We have heard repeatedly during question period the government reassuring Ontarians not to worry: "You will have protection from rate spikes that we know are going to happen in the wake of the privatization of our electricity system, but you will be protected because the OEB is there. The OEB will monitor hydro rates and will ensure that consumers are treated fairly, that they are protected."

One wonders, surely: If the government actually was sincere about wanting to strengthen electricity system oversight, which is what the bill claims to do with its short title, if the government was truly interested in and committed to protecting consumers, then why is it not

allowing the OEB to review the sale of Hydro One? Instead, we are seeing, in this bill, cabinet being given the authority to make an order declaring that a transmission project is needed as a priority project.

This would allow the government to bypass the needs test process that is currently required by the Ontario Energy Board Act, a process that has served Ontarians for years. Currently in this province no transmission or distribution project can go ahead without the approval of the OEB. In most cases, this requires a formal hearing or some kind of public review. During that review process, the OEB is mandated to determine whether the project is in the public interest, whether the interest of consumers will be served by the transmission or distribution project, and whether consumer interests will be protected with respect to prices, the reliability of the energy supply, the quality of the electricity service and the promotion of the use of renewable energy sources. It is only if the project is deemed to be in the public best interest by the OEB that it can be approved.

Bill 112, the bill that is before us today, allows the government to bypass this public-interest needs test. It allows cabinet to make an order declaring that a transmission line may be needed as a priority project. If such a declaration is made, the bill says that the OEB "shall accept that the construction, expansion or reinforcement is needed when forming its opinion."

Electricity and energy advocates from across the province have all raised red flags. They have all expressed significant concerns about the implications of allowing the province to bypass the needs test that has been in place through the OEB, since what this effectively does is open the door for the government to push through politically driven pet projects like we see with Hydro One. It gives the government the ability to go full steam ahead, without any kind of public process, without any kind of regulatory oversight, to take on risky and expensive transmission projects that may not be in the public interest.

It is not clear to us on this side of the House why the government needs the power to bypass this important needs test process.

1530

We've heard the Minister of Energy claim that the changes are necessary to give the government the authority to initiate transmission projects, as if they did not already have that authority. It's important to keep in mind that the government has all the power it needs to initiate and champion priority transmission projects. There is no reason whatsoever for the government to seek additional authority to push through transmission projects without review from the Ontario Energy Board and without determining whether the public interest is served.

For obvious reasons, the government would like to keep the focus on the first part of the bill. They know there is a huge need for consumer protection from aggressive door-to-door salespeople who employ unethical, shady and sometimes ruthless practices in their interactions with people as they try to sell electricity con-

tracts. These electricity retailers too often prey on seniors. They prey on vulnerable people: people on fixed incomes, people who may be newcomers and don't have English as their first language, people who may have low literacy skills and are intimidated by someone at the door aggressively asking them to show their hydro bill. Oftentimes, people aren't even aware, when they give this information over, that behind the scenes they may end up being subscribed to a service they did not sign on for.

This is an issue that has been identified in this House before. Ontarians have been calling for it for years, and there certainly is a need for the government to take action to address this very serious problem. As I said, we've been aware of this for more than a decade. The problem first emerged in 2002, when the electricity market was deregulated and retailers were allowed to enter the electricity system and go door to door to promise consumers that they may pay higher rates, but they would have the stability of fixed rates. We've heard too many stories of consumers who believed that by signing a contract for fixed rates, they would in fact get lower prices. Sadly, this has almost never been the case.

By 2004, as electricity rates were skyrocketing, it was clear that something had to be done. Deregulation was abandoned, and the Regulated Price Plan or RPP was introduced to help cushion consumers from the impact of hydro rate spikes. The RPP is reviewed twice a year by the Ontario Energy Board, so that it better reflects the true cost of producing electricity. But I know that I am not the only MPP in this House who regularly gets emails from constituents who talk about how skyrocketing electricity rates are making it very difficult both to do the family budget and also to do business budgets. We just saw a report in the summer about what a serious impediment the inability to budget for electricity costs is to business growth and development in this province.

Certainly, there is widespread anxiety and fear, with real justification, that the privatization of Hydro One is only going to make this problem worse, that we're only going to see even more up and down, skyrocketing, out-of-control hydro rates that are going to really disadvantage people who are on fixed incomes and are barely able to budget for food and rent, much less try to deal with hydro rates that go all over the place from month to month. In particular, as I mentioned, the impact is very significant for businesses.

To go back to the importance of consumer protection provisions, we know that the OEB plays a very important role in monitoring the practices of the electricity retailing sector. In fact, 70% to 90% of complaint calls to the OEB concern door-to-door sales—misleading information, unethical behaviour at the door. Consumers may be signing contracts thinking that they can avoid these unpredictable spikes in rates if they sign with a retailer, but one of the things that they are not told, when they go to sign these contracts, is that, most often, the contracts are only for the cost of power. They do not protect consumers against increases in delivery, regulatory, global

adjustment or other non-energy charges. As all of us Ontarians who have ever looked at our hydro bills—we see that delivery costs form a huge component of the costs of our monthly bills.

Speaker, these practices are so significant that, on this side of the House, we believe reform won't go far enough. These predatory practices are so harmful to Ontarians that we believe they ought to be phased out completely, not just reformed. This is certainly in line with the Electricity Distributors Association, which also recommended a full phase-out of energy retailers in its 2012 report *The Power to Deliver*.

Happily, I can say that there is a mechanism in place to enable this phase-out of energy retailing, and that is the private member's bill that was introduced by my colleague the MPP for Kenora–Rainy River, called the Ending Predatory Electricity Retailing Act, 2015. That bill, Bill 111, was introduced just prior to the government's introduction of Bill 112. The goal of that private member's bill is to phase out fixed-rate electricity contracts for residential consumers, not simply introduce some of the watered-down reforms that the government has brought forward. That bill did secure the support of MPPs in this Legislature, and it is waiting at the Standing Committee on General Government for committee input. So if the government was really serious about protecting consumers, the government would move forward expeditiously to have that bill get the input that it needs and to become law in the province of Ontario.

Many of the provisions that were included in that private member's bill, the Ending Predatory Electricity Retailing Act, were also reinforced in the recent report that we received from the OEB called *Consumers Come First*. Speaker, that report was released in June 2015, just earlier this summer. That report highlighted the harms that are done to Ontarians by allowing electricity retailing in this province. Some of the findings of that report: Roughly one third of current residential and non-residential contract holders were unaware they had a contract with an electricity retailer, and 40% of those who were unaware that they had a contract were from low-income households—from households with less than \$40,000 of annual income. So low-income people are particularly vulnerable to these predatory practices.

1540

We also know from that OEB report in June that there were no instances where signing an electricity contract actually saved the consumer money. Cost savings were a primary motivation for people who did sign these contracts.

We also heard from the OEB that “almost 60% of consumers who signed contracts that require verification”—that is required if it's at the door—“change their mind and do not complete the verification process,” showing that this is not a decision that people think about and put a lot of—you know, would they compare whether they should or they shouldn't. They feel coerced into it by these heavy-handed tactics at the door from unscrupulous electricity retailers. If they have an oppor-

tunity to reflect, as I said, the majority actually change their mind and don't go through with the contract.

We also know from the OEB that \$2.6 million in fines were levied against energy retailers since 2009 for breaching the consumer protections that are already in place, or consumer protection rules that were in place prior to 2009.

We feel strongly that the energy retailing system is a mess, that the reforms proposed in Bill 112 don't go nearly far enough to protect consumers from predatory practices, and that the private electricity retailing system needs to be fully phased out.

It's like making a silk purse out of a sow's ear. You can't fix this system; you have to get rid of this system. Speaker, we believe strongly that Ontario consumers deserve that from this government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I would very much like to commend the member for London West on actually addressing the content of the bill. Hers was a very well-researched address. While I don't agree with everything she said, I actually do have to commend her on talking about what's actually in the bill—well done.

If, on the one hand, the Conservatives say, “You've gone way too far,” and the NDP say, “You haven't gone far enough,” on the government side we think, “Well, we've probably gone right down the middle, and we're probably not very far from where we should be.” So with that in mind, while many of the comments that the member made were ones that in general I would agree with, she did address a couple of points.

She talked about, shouldn't we support a measure by one of her caucus colleagues to simply ban door-to-door energy retailing? There are many of us in here, including on the government side, who, if the practice of retailing energy contracts door to door were to go away completely, wouldn't shed a single tear. But in software development, there's a law of unintended consequences called regression testing, which means that if you try to solve one problem, do you in fact create another, which is, in legal terms, what came to pass when the lawyers researched what would happen if you simply banned this practice. Would it come back to affect other sectors, or would it come back in other ways that you can't intend? The fact of the matter is, yes, it would, which, while we appreciate the substance of the member for Kenora–Rainy River's proposal, is the reason that the government has put teeth in the existing act, and those teeth will actually get results.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'm pleased to rise to offer my comments on the speech given by the member from London West.

I believe this is all a matter of trust on this type of bill. That's a difficult thing to grasp from this government—the trust part of it—when you see what's been going on for the last number of years. I'm not going to get into all

the scandals this government has been involved with. They're currently under a number of OPP investigations, as we know. However, I think when the government comes through with a bill like this—I mean, we said we certainly are going to support it but hopefully the amendments offered by the opposition will be listened to in committee, and certainly debated and added to this bill.

I want to get back to the matter of trust when the government deals with energy in this province. We've all seen our hydro bills escalate over the last number of years due to a number of things that have happened. I believe we're looking at some 40% over the last couple of years, when we get up to the first of the year, that our hydro rates have gone up. This helps these types of salespersons put pressure on those who maybe in normal circumstances wouldn't sign these types of contracts.

So while we welcome this legislation, I think—and I'll be addressing this later on—we have to certainly look at the matter of trust and what this government is trying to do. I believe they're trying to get us and the public away from thinking about the Hydro One sale and put this bill in its place, just to get the people of Ontario thinking other things right now.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Indeed it is a pleasure to stand and make comments on my friend from London West and her comments.

One of the things that drove it home for me was when she said that about 80% of the Ontario Energy Board's complaints come in from people who have complaints about people coming door to door selling things. That 80% rings a bell: I think it's about 80% of the people in Ontario right now who do not favour the sell-off of Ontario Hydro.

So we're talking about protecting consumers, but how do you protect yourself from a government that, on the heels of an election where they didn't go door to door and say, "I'm going to sell Ontario Hydro," then brings in legislation that does exactly that? Now, I think there's about 58 members or something on the other side. I'm willing to bet a lot of money that not one of them went door to door in the last election and said, "Vote for me and I'll sell Ontario Hydro." I don't talk about broadening the assets; I don't talk about broadening the ownership; I don't talk about that, but actually saying, "I will sell Ontario Hydro."

Interjection.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Well, I won't get into what party was talking about a hundred thousand jobs. We're talking about protecting consumers, Speaker, and I think it's very important, when we talk about that, that we have to protect ourselves from governments that would do that sort of thing.

Having said that, this is legislation that at the heart has a good intent. I think on this side of the House we will be supporting it. It doesn't go far enough. Some of us want it and some of us don't. We'd rather see Sarah Camp-

bell's bill, from Kenora–Rainy River, that said to stop it altogether. That's the consequence. The member for Mississauga–Streetsville said, "For every action there's a reaction." So if you sell Ontario Hydro you know it's going to come back and bite you at the campaign ballot box.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It is a pleasure to talk about this piece of legislation in front of us today. I too want to take a bit of a different spin than the member from Windsor–Tecumseh indicated before. At any time we can help folks in their own homes who are not in touch sometimes with the whole concept, prevent them from being taken advantage of, we should. So I want to relate a story as well.

It didn't happen to my mother, but my mother-in-law. About two years ago, somebody knocks at the door: "Just happened to be in the neighbourhood." By the way, my mother-in-law is 90 years old, in great shape. She drives and does all sorts of things, probably more than I do. But the reality is that the parging outside her house was cracked and was going to create issues. "Could I come and see what kind of damage it's already done inside the house?" So she lets this guy in the house. They go downstairs. By the way, she has been a widow for a couple of years. He says, "Look at the white stuff on those blocks; that's all mould." He writes her a contract to fix the stuff for about \$7,000.

1550

We get a call and, of course, she wants to move out because there is mould in the house. We send somebody in. There's no mould; just some white calcium from the blocks. Anyway, I phoned the guy and I said, "You need to cancel this." "Oh, no, no, you can't. It is signed, sealed and delivered."

I tried a few times and, Speaker, I don't tell people what I do for a living, in many cases. I finally came to the point and I told him who I was and that I would take this into my own hands to protect my mother-in-law. Within about two hours, I got a letter from him saying—so, anything we can do, whether it is hydro, hot water or somebody just going door to door, ripping people off, we need to put a stop to it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you all. I now return to the member for London West. You have two minutes for a reply.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'd like to thank the member for Mississauga–Streetsville, the member from Perth–Wellington, the member for Windsor–Tecumseh and the member for Northumberland–Quinte West for their comments on my remarks.

I think the member from Windsor–Tecumseh really hit the nail on the head. If this is a bill about protecting consumers, then we would not be looking at removing the authority of the Ontario Energy Board to determine whether the public interest is served in hydro transmission and distribution projects. The member for Perth–

Wellington also said that this bill, in some ways, is just a red herring. It is packaging up something that people feel passionately about, which is door-to-door electricity retailing, with something that is going to potentially create huge harm to the people of this province. It is going to directly undermine consumer protection, not in any way strengthen consumer protection.

We know that, as the member for Windsor–Tecumseh reminded us, 80% of Ontarians are opposed to the sale of Hydro One. They want a mechanism that would enable some careful review, some careful oversight, some public consultation and public engagement in whether that is the right decision and whether it serves the interests of the people of this province. People in Ontario have yet to see anything coming from this government to say, in any way, that this is a good deal for Ontario. Instead, what we are seeing is the removal of a mechanism that would allow that oversight.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I will be sharing my time with the member for Ottawa South and the member for Etobicoke Centre. I'm very pleased to be able to speak this afternoon to Bill 112, which is the Strengthening Consumer Protection and Electricity System Oversight Act, which is quite a long title.

What this act actually does is it proposes legislative enhancements, amendments, to the Ontario Energy Board Act—the OEBA—and the Electricity Consumer Protection Act, the ECPA. The first thing it does is something that we've been talking about a lot, which is increasing consumer protection by amending the Electricity Consumer Protection Act to ban door-to-door sales. That will make a big difference.

It makes a number of other amendments, Speaker, around improving consumer advocacy; reinforcing the Ontario Energy Board's ability to ensure reliability and continuity of service; enhancing the OEB's ability to levy penalties for noncompliant activities; strengthening the oversight of utilities by the Ontario Energy Board; clarifying what local distribution companies can do; and finally, providing tools to cabinet to ensure that critical transmission infrastructure is built.

But I want to spend a little bit of time on enhancing consumer protection, because I know some of the members here this afternoon have talked about the sort of door-to-door and phone call scams that they've run into within the family. Certainly what I wanted to mention was the number of people who come to my constituency office. I'm sure my constituency office isn't in any way unique in the number of people who have come to constituency offices saying, "I'm at my wits' end. I've got this energy contract with some sort of energy retailer. I've tried everything I can think of to try to get out of it. I can't, and I'm stuck with it. Can you help me?"

They must have been awfully active in Guelph at one point, the energy retailers, because there was a period of maybe six months when I had a staff member who did virtually nothing else other than deal with trying to break

these energy retailers' contracts that had been sold door to door. We had things where, "Well, my girlfriend was staying with me this weekend and she signed the contract. She's not paying the rent or paying the electricity, but they've got her name on a statement and they won't let me out of it." You heard all these really quite bizarre but very real situations where people had themselves attached to these contracts that they couldn't get out of.

What we're doing with this act is doing what countless people have said we need to do. There has been amendment after amendment after amendment that just dealt with trying to clean up the process, and I think we've gotten to the point where what we're essentially saying is that if you can't fix the process, just stop it. That's what this act does. When it comes to the energy retailers, it just bans going door to door.

In addition to that, because you could still have phone or mail or whatever contact, it will also extend the cooling-off period, because often in these circumstances, once people actually get the contract, read the fine print and figure out what it is they've done, they say, "Oh, no." The current cooling-off period to get out of one of these contracts is 10 days, so the other thing that this does is it actually extends the cooling-off period from 10 days to 20 days, during which a consumer who has signed one of these things can actually get out of the contract without penalty. I'm sure that there are a lot of people all over the province who will be quite relieved that this is a practice that we're ending, and that we're extending the cooling-off period when they do happen.

One of the other things that I wanted to talk about is the whole matter of transmission infrastructure, because I think the degree of control which the Ontario Energy Board has over the building of transmission lines is not widely understood. When we're talking about transmission, we're talking about those great big towers that you see that are transmitting electricity over a long distance. That's what we call transmission.

As with anything else on your hydro bill, whether it's generation or transmission or whatever, the charge actually goes to the Ontario Energy Board for approval, and what happens in some cases is that the Ontario Energy Board will look at a transmission project and say, "You know, the business case for this project really isn't very good, so we're just not going to allow this charge that you would have to put on the bill to build the transmission line that's under discussion."

1600

That sounds like good consumer protection, but the problem is, Ontario is a huge province. When you get to rural Ontario, particularly when you get to northern Ontario, there are actually instances where we build transmission lines not because there's a great business case, but because that area of the province—that rural area, that northern area—needs a new transmission line. What this act will do is give cabinet the authority to identify those priorities so that, when there's a real need for transmission to be improved in rural and northern Ontario, we will actually have the capacity to do that.

I'm going to turn this over now to my colleague from Ottawa South.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to speak to Bill 112, the Strengthening Consumer Protection and Electricity System Oversight Act.

As we've heard earlier, the summary of this legislation is that it's going to strengthen and enhance the capabilities of the Ontario Energy Board in order to further protect electricity ratepayers and also to boost consumer protection. Bill 112 proposes legislative enhancements to the Ontario Energy Board Act and the Energy Consumer Protection Act. These enhancements include:

- increasing consumer protection by amending the ECPA, including banning door-to-door sales;
- improving consumer advocacy through processes that give consumers a direct voice in OEB proceedings, including enabling cabinet to set requirements;
- reinforcing the OEB's ability to ensure reliability and continuity of service to all consumers in Ontario in the event of a failing transmitter or distributor;
- enhancing the OEB's ability to levy penalties for non-compliant activities;
- strengthening the OEB's oversight of utility transactions and structures; and
- clarifying relationships among local distribution companies and their affiliates.

As we've heard earlier, it will also provide cabinet the ability to ensure that critical transmission infrastructure can be built.

I would like to focus on the consumer protection side of this legislation for a little bit. I think we've all, as members in our offices, experienced distress calls from constituents who have been signed to a door-to-door sales contract—and you find this out many, many months down the road. As the member from London—Fanshawe mentioned, a lot of these consumers are below \$40,000 in income, and also seniors. So they're a very vulnerable population, and I believe that the amendments in this act will go a long way to protect them.

I'll say a few things about them here. The proposed Strengthening Consumer Protection and Electricity System Oversight Act includes changes to the Energy Consumer Protection Act that would prohibit electricity retailers and gas marketers to sell energy retail contracts at the consumer's home, while still allowing retailers or marketers to engage in advertising activities door to door. The ministry and the OEB are also proposing to more strictly govern door-to-door marketing activity. By banning sales at consumers' homes, the proposed legislation will protect consumers from aggressive sales tactics at the doorsteps of their homes and allow for a more considered decision-making process prior to signing up for an energy contract.

There are also a number of other proposed amendments to enhance consumer protection. For example, stricter parameters are being proposed around the

contract verification. Currently, only contracts signed in person are subject to a verification process. With some of the changes in banning door-to-door sales, more and more contracts would be signed online or through other methods.

Of course, we've heard earlier that it's going to increase the cooling-off period from 10 to 20 days. I think this is an excellent measure. We've all experienced a situation where we walked away and we've been sold something or convinced of something that we know is not in our best interest. It's important that we protect people.

I do understand what the member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex was saying in terms of maybe—I understood what he was saying; I'm not sure if he's right in his concerns about people buying new technology. I'm not sure that this bill would prohibit somebody from buying a thermostat, but it might put some restrictions on people buying a thermostat that came with a long-term energy contract, or having that as part of that contract.

I want to say a couple of things. First of all, I just want to note that we had some cinematic references here today. I know that the member from Oshawa and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing were quoting Yoda. I missed part of that. Also, the member from Beaches—East York was talking about Gollum and Precious. I've been struggling, trying to find a cinematic reference. The only thing I could think of was Hydrozilla. I don't know how many people who are around remember Hydrozilla from 2007. I'm waiting for the next appearance of Hydrozilla. I know we had a Trojan Horse make an appearance last spring around budget time, so I'm sure Hydrozilla is in somebody's closet somewhere and will be coming out sooner rather than later. That's all in good fun, Mr. Speaker.

I do have a concern, though, with the members of the official opposition describing the Hydro sale as a fire sale. I think it's a prudent thing to do, to invest in needed infrastructure and also to pay down some significant debt.

I don't think anybody on that side can say “fire sale” without using the number 407 in the same breath.

Mr. Grant Crack: I remember.

Mr. John Fraser: I think many of us remember. We also remember that the members on the other side were selling Hydro lock, stock and barrel. We also remember they were going to deregulate lock, stock and barrel. We also remember that they actually had a branded racing yacht—yes, a catamaran that was branded Hydro One; go back and check it out—around 2000. That was something that Hydro One had invested in. So I don't want to take any lessons from people on the other side about Hydro and our leveraging of that asset.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for giving me this time, and I yield to the member from Etobicoke Centre.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Etobicoke Centre.

Mr. Yvan Baker: It's a pleasure to follow my colleagues the Minister of Education and the member for Ottawa South in speaking to this piece of legislation.

I'd just like to start with a brief story from my community in Etobicoke Centre. One of the things that I do on a monthly basis in the fall and in the spring is continue the tradition that my predecessor Donna Cansfield started in Etobicoke Centre, which is to hold a monthly seniors' advisory group meeting. Every meeting has a little bit of a different topic. We often bring in speakers who speak to issues that people on the advisory group would like to hear about.

One of the things that I sometimes have the opportunity to do and take the time to do is just to share with folks in the meeting the things that I'm working on as their representative. One of the things that I brought up at a recent meeting was the steps that are being planned to protect consumers particularly around door-to-door sales of energy contracts. I brought that up in the context of a list of things that our government is working on. So I was talking about infrastructure, I was talking about health care, I was talking about education—I was talking about a range of things, and when I got to this issue, everyone's heads in the room started to nod; everyone started to agree. This is something, in other words, that touches everybody; certainly, it touches a lot of seniors in my community. It touched everyone in that room, or everyone in that room could think of someone who had been touched by that. But to me, that was a vote of confidence, a sign of support around some of the measures that are in here, because this is the kind of thing that touches so many people in a negative way.

I'm actually really excited about the protection measures that are in this bill. It's the right thing to do. I think it protects people at a time when, frankly, some people are in a vulnerable position, where they're in their home and they are under pressure to make a decision. So it's the right thing to do. But I also think that it will ensure that people make more informed decisions and better decisions for themselves, and ultimately end up with the lowest possible energy rates that they can.

A couple of things that are in the bill that I think are really positive: First of all, this idea that the sale cannot be completed in the home is a powerful thing. What that does is, that incentivizes those who are pursuing marketing activities at the door to do so with the knowledge that they're going to have to come back and complete the sale at a time when the person is not feeling pressure, is not feeling urgency, is not potentially in a vulnerable position in their home, not feeling uncomfortable. I think that's a powerful thing. That will incent a lot of folks who would normally have malintent to not pursue the door-to-door sales tactic in the first place, which I think is very positive.

1610

That protects people from those aggressive sales tactics, so they wouldn't have to deal as often with those aggressive sales tactics as well. It allows for a more considered decision-making approach to the energy contract. Giving people time to make a decision has been proven to lead to better decision-making in virtually all circumstances. I'm currently in the market for a car, and I

have to tell you that, mainly because of my schedule, I've had to take time to make that decision. I know that, as a result, I haven't acquired the car quite as quickly as I would have liked, but the good news is that by the time I make the acquisition, I'll have made the best possible decision. I think this is a good example of how we're helping folks to make sure they take the time to make the right call.

There are also a number of other measures here to protect consumers. One is the verification process. There will be a verification process, not only for contracts that are signed in person, but contracts online or otherwise. I think that's a very positive thing. The other thing, too, is this cooling-off period that the Minister of Education spoke about. Again, it speaks to the earlier point I was making about the time it takes to make a decision. This additional time, extending the cooling-off period from 10 to 20 days and allowing people to cancel a contract without penalty, I think, is a very important and powerful tool.

Again, when the person is at the door, if there is that discussion, and the consumer is aware and the salesperson is aware, what that does is alleviate the need and the incentive to put in place pressure sales tactics. I think that's very positive as well. This legislation would allow the OEB to impose higher penalties and more flexible penalties for contraventions of its rules and regulations. Again, this is all about disincenting unscrupulous, inappropriate behaviour. I think that's all very positive.

There are a couple of other things in this bill that I'll quickly mention, in the minute or so I have left. Changing topics a little bit, continuity of service is something I have heard a lot about from my constituents. We had a power outage in Etobicoke a number of years ago that lasted for days—it touched many parts of the city. I think that people who lived through that, which was many of my constituents, are very sensitive to the impact that can have on people's lives, no matter where they are in the province.

Currently, the legislation provides the OEB with powers to ensure that continuity of service for distribution company customers would carry on in the event of an emergency. Under this new legislation, these powers would be extended to transmission companies as well. It's basically just ensuring that the protections that are currently in place get extended to transmission companies.

In a nutshell, when I think back to the people I represent, the seniors who were at that meeting I was talking about and the broader community, at the end of the day we want to make sure they can make decisions without feeling pressure and with the right information at their fingertips. Ultimately, this will lead to the lowest possible rates for those consumers and the best possible decisions and the best quality of life.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Harris: Speaker, I will just chime in for a few minutes here. I was listening to the inaugural

speech on Bill 112 by the Minister of Education, and it triggered my memory. She spoke about the fact that her constituency office perhaps was not unique from the rest of ours, and I would obviously disagree with that. I remember not too long ago that I was actually over in Guelph, joining parents—predominantly mothers—owners, businesspeople of daycares right across the province who had significant concerns about a piece of legislation she was bringing in. No doubt her office will probably be hearing more from Ontarians, especially residents of Guelph, about the recent fire sale of Hydro One and how that will lead to increased costs on their hydro bills.

Of course, as we talk about this act to amend the Energy Consumer Protection Act, we should perhaps have embedded more items that would actually protect the consumer—the ratepayer—from this government itself. I can't help but think about the things she is hearing about the labour disruptions currently in our schools. We read this afternoon about how a school not too far from here, or a community just west of here, is not locking its doors. Of course, it was an initiative brought forward by their government to ensure the safety of our children in their schools; that folks who didn't have business coming into the school would have to buzz in, be properly let in. But with that labour disruption, the school doors are unlocked and anybody can come and go, perhaps, as they please.

I have young kids, and some of them may be watching today—they may be watching something else, of course—and if they are, I think that they would be concerned about this as well.

So that's my two minutes on that. I think, in fact, her constituency office is perhaps unique compared to ours.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions or comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, I'd like to go down memory lane.

I remember that when I sat on Stoney Creek council in the 1990s, we had a hydro commission; we had Stoney Creek hydro. Those were the good days. We had one of the most efficient hydro units in Ontario. In the great blackout, we were the first back online in Ontario. We had our own trucks. We had our own commission before amalgamation. That's when things started to go downhill.

After amalgamation in 2000, we had another group of people in this Legislature who, in 2002, passed deregulation of hydro. That was the next disaster that happened. We had all of these retailers popping up, all of these middlemen popping up from everywhere—Reliance, all these other guys coming out of nowhere, knocking on doors, going to our elders in Stoney Creek and irritating them, asking to look at their bills, and confusing them, depending on what age they were. It became a real horror story.

That is when it all began: back in the 1990s, when Mr. Harris decided to deregulate.

Now we are in this situation where it's going to get worse again, because now we're going to sell off what we own to make it even worse.

So we've had one bad thing after another that I've witnessed in the last few years, and it continues. It started with them, and now it's ending up with them. They're going to sell 60% of our precious Hydro.

Where are we going to end up? You can guarantee that your bills are going to go up. You heard it here, folks: Your bills are going to go up. There are going to be all kinds of middlemen appearing out of nowhere. All of these new companies are going to try to buy out the other 10-percenters. That's going to happen too, because there is nothing in the provision that says you can't buy out the other 10-percenters. All of a sudden, you're going to have—jeez, I hate this word, but I see it in my career a lot—a “monopoly.” Once you get a monopoly, you're in big trouble. Trust me, we're headed that way.

I don't understand, when we've got Niagara Falls just down the street, why we pay some of the highest hydro in Canada. It's a mystery.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Ça me fait plaisir de parler aujourd'hui au sujet du projet de loi 112.

I'm so happy to see this bill before us, and I hope that everybody will support it.

Let me give you my own experience—not my grandmother's, not my stepmother's. On Saturday afternoon, I answered the door, and this 6 foot 4, probably 250-pound person was telling me that he was at my door on behalf of the government of Ontario. He asked me to review my electricity bill. So I got the electricity bill. “Oh, my God, you're being tricked” or raped or whatever. “The electricity that you pay is too much. Sign here, and we'll guarantee that the cost of your electricity will go down.” Of course, I knew a little bit better than to sign. But do you know what? I had a lot of difficulty to get this person out. Even though I was telling him I am a member of the government, he wouldn't take no for an answer. He was very, very aggressive. I can just imagine if my mom would have answered the door.

So we need that sooner than later. I hope it will go to committee and it will be legislated and passed to protect not just our seniors, but persons like me.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

1620

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to add some comments on Bill 112, An Act to amend the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010 and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998, and to add comments to the speeches from the Minister of Education, the member from Ottawa South and the member from Etobicoke South.

Certainly we've all had stories of people who have signed contracts under high pressure from door-to-door salespeople. Frankly, I have no problem with banning pretty much any door-to-door sales, because they're just too open to—in particular, for our seniors, who are maybe open to more manipulation. I don't have a problem with that. We've said we're supporting the bill.

I think the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex raised a few good points in his speech when he talked about whether maybe they're going a little too far with the 20-day cooling-down period. This is not for door-to-door sales but just any sort of purchase. I think he's maybe on to something and that we should get some feedback at committee from people who are in business on that, to know what maybe unintended consequences would be coming from extending this cooling period.

The other thing is banning commissions. It's not like commissions are a terrible thing. They're used in all kinds of business. Maybe they're terrible when the government is handing them out for the Pan Am Games, but in many businesses, they're a pretty normal thing—certainly, in the car business. For my brothers who are in the car business, it's a way of motivating people in the retail business. The member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex has had a lot of experience there. So that's another part of this bill that I think maybe we should have some feedback on at committee, from people who might be affected by it, to sort out in greater detail whether these proposed changes put forward by the government actually make sense or not.

I'll have to do another hit later to be able to talk about some other things.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. The member for Ottawa South can respond.

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to thank very much the members from Kitchener–Conestoga and Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, the Attorney General, and the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka.

It's evident that we all support the consumer protection parts of this bill. We all have heard those horror stories. The Attorney General spoke about her experience. It's important.

I know that the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex talked about concern over retailers and perhaps we're cramping that. I can understand that concern. I'm not sure that this bill will actually have the effect that he says it will or that he thinks it may have, but I take that point. But first and foremost, it's important for us to protect consumers and to strengthen the OEB.

In response to the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, no one can own more than 10% of Hydro One. That's clear; that's in the legislation. In fact, it is a monopoly right now and will continue to be.

The other point I want to make is that he referenced Niagara, and it is a great resource for us. Hydro is a complex thing. You have baseline, you have nuclear, and you have hydro that's a bit of a baseline. But we have two peaks, so it's a very difficult system to manage. You have to balance that system. Sometimes you have to offload hydro; sometimes you have to buy it. So it's not as simple as turning on the tap. I'd just like to make that point.

In response to, again, the repeat of the fire sale: I want to add again that it must be difficult for them not to say "fire sale" and put the numbers "407" in.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 112, An Act to amend the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010 and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998.

I'd like to start off by saying this bill has some good points. I think that any time we stand in this House, we need to be thinking of the consumer always, protecting them first and foremost. But I'd really like to suggest that it would have been nice to see the bill about Hydro One be in this House, so that we could actually be protecting ratepayers by preventing continuous electricity rate hikes in the first place.

The problem is this Liberal government doesn't want to talk about that. They don't want, necessarily, to protect Ontarians, or they wouldn't be going forward with the fire sale. Yet they bring in a bill like this to truly try to distract Ontarians and make them feel good that we're doing some stuff, using the word "protect."

At the end of the day, this government has done a horrible job over their 12 years of the whole, entire energy sector. I'm going to talk about a lot of them today, but before I start, my colleague and good friend from Windsor–Tecumseh brought a story in—my mom experienced a very similar thing, where she got a phone call from somebody trying to be a granddaughter that was in another community and that she needed to send money. We've all heard of people—we've all had them probably in our own families or at least neighbours—that have had these door-to-door high-pressure sales pitches come. We need to put that type of protection in to prevent that type of thing, but we need to be looking at the big picture in a lot of these.

I'm going to start by talking a little bit about the Hydro One fire sale. Every poll that certainly is out there shows consistently widespread opposition to the government's sale of Hydro One. If you want to protect the consumer, step one would be to listen to the consumer and not do things that are going to put them in harm's way. One hundred and seventy municipalities so far have passed resolutions against it. That's one in every three municipal leaders opposing the sale of Hydro One, Mr. Speaker. It includes municipalities in my riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound; I believe West Grey was the first of them, but there are a number jumping to the same conclusion and bringing their thoughts and concerns to me, as are the constituents in each of those municipalities, saying, "This is just wrong. Please put a stop to this bill. What can you do to make sure this does not happen?"

The shenanigans with the Hydro One sale are very akin to the shenanigans we saw and continue to see with the Green Energy Act and wind turbines. They are, again, going full steam ahead with really no thought process for the long-term ramifications. We've seen rates triple under this government. They're projected to go up another 42% over the next four years, and that, Mr. Speaker, was before they even thought—well, maybe they were scheming to sell this long before, but certainly,

as a result of their overspending ways over the last 12 years, they're now trying to find ways to cover all of that and ensure that they have a revenue source.

They've had record revenues—record revenues in their whole term—and at the end of the day, they still overspent, and now they're coming back to try to take an asset that actually produces net revenues for the taxpayer of Ontario. Talk about protecting our consumers. They're going to take that in a fire sale, and it'll just be gone. Overnight, they will take that, and who knows what they'll do with the funds because we can't really know. They didn't campaign on this. I believe earlier in this conversation, the minister responsible for poverty reduction and strategy—she's also President of the Treasury Board and the Deputy Premier—used a comment, saying that she's going to tell people to “get off my porch” about this bill. I'm going to tell you, Mr. Speaker: There are a lot of people in my riding, next time around, who will be telling that Deputy Premier and any Liberal candidate to “get off my porch.”

They did not run an election on “We will fire-sale Hydro One.” At the end of the day, they did not come out and be clear with Canadians. They did not say they were going to do that, or I think we would have had quite a different, at the end of the day—I believe my colleague from Parry Sound—Muskoka used the term “unintended consequence.” I believe the consumers of Ontario right now are suffering an unintended consequence, because 170 municipalities and over 180,000 people do not want this fire sale to go through.

When it comes to electricity and hydro, what everyone is waiting to hear is the Premier and her energy minister's plan to explain how they expect families, businesses and public institutions to prepare for the hydro sticker shock on their bills after they sell Hydro One.

Speaking of consumer protection: I'm going to raise the question of credibility at this point. Rates have tripled under this Liberal government, and they're expected to increase another 42% in the next three to four years. As I said earlier, that's before the fire sale and getting rid of a revenue-producing asset, which we will lose total control over if they go forward with this fire sale scheme. They're trying to do things now to cover up their 12-year spending addiction, and they're doing it on the backs, again, of the Ontario taxpayers, those people who are most challenged in our society, who do not have the ability to afford the doubling and tripling of their hydro prices, to make a choice of whether to eat or heat—

Interjection: Sneaky, sneaky.

Mr. Bill Walker: Sneaky, sneaky; I'm hearing words across the Legislature.

These are the vulnerable in our society who we need to protect. You talk about consumer protection; that's what we should be thinking in everything we do when we come in with legislation.

In my riding last year, it was huge in regard to hydro disconnects. Sixty families in my riding of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound alone had their utilities disconnected last fall because they couldn't afford these increased Liberal

rates—talk about, again, consumer protection. Had they, over their 12 years, run the energy sector properly, we would have protected all consumers because we wouldn't have the highest rates in North America, which we do today, and projected to go higher. We used to be the leader in energy rates, the lowest, which encouraged more people to set up shop in Ontario, allowed more employment, allowed more jobs, a good style of living. Now we have the highest. They're chasing companies out of our great province to the States and to our bordering provinces, and with higher rates we're going to see more and more of that. How does that equate to protecting consumers? How much more out of control will these rates get?

1630

Ed Clark, the consultant they hand-picked to come in and do this report on Hydro One, has not put anything in black and white. I believe that someone in here said earlier that the devil is in the details. Ontarians need to be able to see the devil in the details. What is the rationale? Has there been an actual costing, a true profit analysis, a business-case analysis to say this will protect consumers, the people of Ontario, in the long term? I don't believe so, and I very much believe that the reason we haven't seen it is that they have not done an in-depth, value-for-dollar benefit analysis. It's totally out of control, as my colleague from Elgin—Middlesex—London says, and he pays attention to this stuff very well.

He's a small business owner who has done extremely well—he and his brother and his family—over many, many years. They are the type of business that is the backbone of Ontario and the economy we could and should have, and the jobs that could be created if we had someone like him actually sitting in the Minister of Finance's chair to ensure that we are putting policies in place that are actually protecting consumers and ensuring we have the opportunity for businesses to thrive and grow in Ontario. This current government is thriving and growing business everywhere but Ontario. The only business that I believe has probably had an increase in the last 12 and a half years is moving vans to move more people, sadly, out of our great province.

Interjection: My nephew is one of them.

Mr. Bill Walker: Your nephew is one of them, absolutely. We probably all have family members who have moved out of this great province because they just don't know, and now they see this. I've had a number of people who are actually retirees saying, “I don't know how much longer I can hold on. I may actually have to leave Ontario,” because of the poor job this government has done to manage our whole energy sector. Yet they bring in a piece of legislation and try to give it the nice, slick title, “consumer protection.”

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: Doctors are certainly a group out there that I'm hearing a lot from, as well, who are worried. Many of them are suggesting, “I'm going to leave.” A lot of new doctors are telling me, person to person, “I don't know if I can stay in Ontario. My dream

was to serve the people of my community,” whether it be as a general practice physician, a specialist or an emergency room doctor, whatever they want to do. Right now, with this government, they’re all starting to double think. They’re coming out with a lot of debt and not a lot of jobs. They cut 50 teaching positions, when we have 800,000 people continually looking for a doctor, who do not have their own physician.

Factor in this fire sale of Hydro, along with the ORPP and the mess of the gas plants, Ornge, Ehealth—the boondoggles are just endless, Mr. Speaker.

Interjection: Don’t forget about the diabetes registry.

Mr. Bill Walker: The diabetes registry is another one where we spent—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, I believe that you will find that standing order 23(b)(i) directs the member to focus his remarks on the subject of the bill. While we’ve granted wide latitude in his remarks, he is nowhere close to the subject of the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would suggest to the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound that it’s very important to ensure that his remarks are relevant to the bill and bring his comments back to the bill. Thank you.

Mr. Bill Walker: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member from Mississauga–Streetsville standing up and trying to suggest that he can use a technical matter to bring something back, but do you know what? The reality is that he and his government truly don’t understand the impact his government’s energy policies have had on non-urban communities. I think he would do very well to listen to some of our remarks and pay attention to them, because we’re trying to build some context to their poor decision-making. When they use terminology such as “consumer protection,” it’s just a word that tries to blind over. They’re trying to distract from the real issues at hand.

He saw no problem with Ontario ratepayers paying billions in cancellation costs for gas plants that produced zero electricity: “Just the same way as when the United States committed to go to the moon, they didn’t know how much it was going to cost”—that’s our Mississauga–Streetsville MPP Bob Delaney on the Liberal gas plant scandal—“all they knew was that one way or the other they were going to get there.” We can’t afford that—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, I repeat the same point of order that you previously called the member on. As well, it is not the practice in this Legislature to refer to members by name, but by either their office or their riding.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Yes, the member is quite right. We are endeavouring to raise the standard in here, and to ensure that we refer to each other

in respectful terms, we refer to each other by riding names or ministers’ names, not the member’s name. But I understood you were quoting from an article, if that’s correct. But at the same time, I would again ask the member to ensure that his comments are relevant to the bill and, if he wishes to talk about hydro issues, to bring it back to the bill.

Mr. Bill Walker: Of course I respect this Legislature, and certainly you, Mr. Speaker. I will suggest that I’m happy to pass this to Hansard, because I did in fact refer to Mississauga–Streetsville in my first comment, and in the quote it does say “Mississauga–Streetsville MPP Bob Delaney.” I certainly respect that.

At the end of the day, what I want to do is talk about substantive issues in here. I want to talk about protecting the consumer, and most of my remarks are trying to outline and highlight that this government has not been a steward of consumer protection. They’ve decimated this great province. They’ve killed jobs because of their handling of the energy sector particularly, and now we’re talking about a bill that is going to protect consumers in regard to door-to-door salespeople.

They talk about protecting the consumer, and yet they’ve removed the Ombudsman. They’ve removed the accountability and oversight that the people of Ontario have had basically since day one, to be able to have insight into what’s going on in any of our government agencies. And yet this government put it in a bill and has actually physically removed—the Ombudsman will not have the ability to look into Hydro One after this. How can you talk about consumer protection, and yet you remove something as significant and fundamental in principle as the person who is charged with ensuring that there’s oversight and accountability in our government, in our Legislature, in those people duly elected by the great Ontario public?

I am at times maybe wandering a little bit because I’m trying to paint the picture that I believe the people of Ontario are seeing through some of this. They’re worried about some of the things that have happened in the last 12 years, as I am, when they said, “Just trust us. Don’t worry about the details. Just take that little headline and believe us that we’re going to run the best government in Ontario.” Sadly, they have doubled our debt. It will be over \$300 billion. That’s on the backs of our children, our grandchildren and, if they keep going at the rate they are and this Hydro sale goes through, it will be on the backs of our great-great-grandchildren.

I believe my colleague from Prince Edward county suggested this morning that we are in a time now where we are probably getting very close to the precipice of going over that debt cliff. Our young people are really struggling out there. We have really big challenges to fulfill, and a lot of that goes back to our hydro sector. He’s charged with actually providing oversight in regard to the Hydro One fire sale. His fundamental goal, I think, if he was here today—and I asked him—is to protect the consumer from the mismanagement, so that they’re not going to have to pay for many, many, many years.

They've tripled the debt. Again, I think he referenced this morning in his question that our third-biggest government expenditure after health care and education is paying our debt, and yet they're going to take the Hydro One fire sale and take that revenue source out. In that mindset, how are they actually protecting the consumer?

I applaud my seatmate and colleague, who is paying intent focus on this government and the Hydro One fire sale, and I believe a fundamental principle that he will follow is protecting the consumers, the people whom he has been given the privilege to serve, as we all have in this great House.

The hydro rate increases, again, the rate fiasco caused by the Green Energy Act: Groups like chambers of commerce, including the Owen Sound and District Chamber of Commerce, are calling on the Liberals to prove that their sale of Hydro One won't cause electricity rates to rise, which in my mind, if they rise, is not protecting the consumer.

We want to see that fully costed value-for-money audit prior to the sale going forward. That's a pretty simple thing. I think, if you were buying a business or getting into business, you would want to know the reality of the situation when you're buying. I think any government with any credibility whatsoever would be prepared to stand in front of Ontarians and put that in black and white in front of the people that they're supposed to be protecting and serving, so that they know it is going to be a good deal, not just in the short term to cover some of their overspending addiction habits, but so that at the end of day, for years and years and years in the future, we are not selling an asset that is going to actually not provide protection to us from rising rates.

1640

These rate increases that we have seen over the last 12 years, and that we project—they've actually projected; the Liberals have projected a 42% increase, and that's without the fire sale of Hydro One—are actually going to have rate increases, and they are now starting to take a toll on our public institutions. They're forcing cuts in the classroom, hospitals and long-term-care homes. This really brings into question the integrity of this government. How can they justify selling Hydro One, a core public asset, to cover the billions that they have wasted on scandals?

How can they stand here, in good stead, and talk about protecting consumers, with the track record that they have to admit to? I know they're going to regret to admit it. I would have a challenge, too, if I had to go in front of those people who sent me to Queen's Park and say, "This is my record after the last 12 years." Scandal after scandal, three criminal investigations into the Premier's office, they've doubled the debt, the deficit is out of control, Ornge, the cuts to our hospital sector that are going on now—at the end of the day, it's a real challenge. As I say, I want to stand here today and protect families like those 60 families in Grey-Bruce whose lights and heat and hydro they allowed to be shut off—to

show, really, what's happening in this province under their watch.

They have failed in protecting the consumers and the taxpayers and, most importantly, the people, the most needy people in our society. They have failed significantly in their 12 years in government to protect the people of Ontario.

Their energy plan is one of irresponsible governance. We need to stand up and ensure that we are standing here, as the opposition—ourselves and the third party—to hold them to account, to ensure that they don't make any of the same poor choices that are, again, in fact—rather than protecting the consumers, they're bringing harm to those people, the taxpayers. Consumers, taxpayers, whatever word we want to use, there is only one group out there: The people we have been given the privilege and honour to serve.

I believe my colleague from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex talked about wind turbines. That's one that, in my riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, is yet again an example. I don't think anyone in my constituency would suggest that this government acted in good faith to protect the consumers by taking away the ability of the local autonomy of a council to say whether they want those forms of wind energy, or lack thereof, to be in their backyard.

I'm not certain how, if I was in their shoes, I could go door to door and suggest to people, face to face, that I protected you as a consumer by taking away that ability for local democracy, which has served us so well in every other function of government, to be put into practice. They usurped the Municipal Act for their own decision to go down a path that they ideologically believe—and still can't believe they won't step back from.

At the end of the day, our job is to serve the great people of Ontario. We need, as politicians, to be accountable. I can't believe, again, that they have stripped the authority of the Ombudsman, and the ability of the Ombudsman, to look into this. I can't believe they won't put a fully costed, black-and-white document in front of Ontarians before they do this. They want to bring in a bill to talk about consumer protection. I think, at the end of the day, when they go back out on the hustings in 2018 and they talk about consumer protection, the truth will be in the pudding then.

I think, to quote the Deputy Premier again, people are going to be saying in mass numbers, "Get off my porch. You did not protect me. In fact, you sold out this province. You sold out my kids and grandkids by the levels of debt that you have"—I'll even go to the House leader's house, with his son, who I have had the pleasure of meeting a couple of times, and try to explain to him why a certain member of his family would vote, in many cases, the way he did to do the things he did in the energy sector. I'll try to help him with that, and I'll say, "I will be pleased to help you on your porch."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am pleased to rise to respond to some of the remarks that were offered by the member

from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. I have to say, sitting on this side of the House, it's been rather interesting listening to the debate from the official opposition because you would never guess that they were actually, when they were in government, responsible for bringing in the first process of hydro privatization. But they have, apparently, recognized the error of their ways and they recognize how important it is to maintain public assets. I think certainly all Ontarians would agree, or at least 80% of Ontarians—four out of five Ontarians recognize how important it is to keep Ontario's electricity system in public hands.

The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound did make some excellent points about the lack of real consumer protections in this bill. One of our biggest concerns on this side of the House is the fact that the bill removes the ability of the OEB to assess whether an electricity transmission or distribution project is in the public interest. That is something that has been sorely lacking throughout everything that we've heard from the government about its plans to privatize Hydro One. Not once have Ontarians been given any evidence that this proposal is in the best interests of the people of this province.

That is what MPPs should be thinking about every step of the way: Everything we do should be to ensure that the interests of Ontarians are protected.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions or comments?

Hon. David Orazietti: It's a pleasure to rise today and respond to comments from the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, and the bluster on the other side with regard to Hydro One and some of the related issues.

The reality is, Speaker, that the opposition has stood in the House and they have railed against Hydro One. André Marin wrote a report and talked about the mismanagement in the organization, the problems with the billing, and all kinds of other issues. Yet today, there is no better organization out there in the opposition's mind than Hydro One.

On this side of the House, Speaker, we feel that we can do better, that we can add more rigour to this organization. We can improve the way in which consumers receive services from Hydro One.

As well, there's a lot of misinformation out there, Speaker, because the opposition would like the consumers to believe that Hydro One actually sets the rates. Hydro One does no such thing and never will. That's the Ontario Energy Board. The Ontario Energy Board will have stronger powers and greater regulatory ability to provide oversight to the sector. And that will help to protect consumers. They will be setting the rates, as they have always done.

One of the things that I know consumers will be very pleased with is the banning of these high-pressure sales, the door-to-door energy contracts, both for electricity and natural gas. That's something that we have heard far too much about, certainly in our ministry, around these types of contracts, with seniors being taken advantage of and other individuals who aren't familiar with these con-

tracts. They are often roped into a long-term contract that's well above market rates, Speaker. We are pleased to be bringing that to an end.

We hope that the opposition will support the legislation because it makes good sense for consumers and good sense for Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions or comments?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: It's a pleasure to be able to speak to an Act to amend the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010 and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998. This bill does make some small improvements to a few minor points, such as prohibiting unscrupulous salesmen, if you would, going to the doors of consumers and talking them into signing inappropriate, improper or unfair agreements for electricity. It's good to see that happen.

Unfortunately, this bill does get carried away with things like setting the date, the time that they can advertise to talk to these people, where they can advertise, and how they can do it. A lot of time is spent talking about a little bit of improvement. So it's a lot of red tape for a little bit of protection.

Really, the problem in the energy sector isn't the fact that some salesmen knock on doors and sign contracts that aren't quite right. We have the highest cost of electricity in North America. That is just killing our industry and it's hurting our people who are on lesser incomes. They just literally can't afford the hydro bills we have in this province.

1650

Mismanagement of the hydro file is something that this government has done for the last 12 years. They've got the Green Energy Act with solar and wind power, which is costing us up to \$100 billion in subsidies, which is all huge money and coming from ratepayers, taxpayers—the same person always. It's going offshore. We could have got the green energy, if that's what we felt we needed, from our neighbours in Quebec at about a third or a quarter of the cost, and the money would have stayed in Canada. We would have helped our neighbour, we would have helped our citizens here and would have addressed a problem that needed to be addressed.

Now we're going to sell Hydro One and solve all of our problems for infrastructure. We get to keep the debt, we don't have Hydro One, and we don't have hydro infrastructure. So we're not going anywhere very fast.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's indeed a pleasure, as always, to stand and refer to words spoken by my good friend from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, who always hits the nail on the head. He reminded us that the Liberals have been in power for 12 years. There have been problems with Ontario Hydro. Their answer is, rather than fix the problem, we'll spend a lot of money fixing up the infrastructure, and then we'll disregard the \$800 million it brings us in revenue and sell it to our friends.

It's interesting, when you live in the bubble in a majority government and you breathe that rarefied air:

The spin doctors are actually pumping that air in there. So you're not listening to the real people in Ontario. When you have, out of 444 municipalities, over 170 actually passing resolutions saying, "Don't do this"—and yet, they don't listen. There is no shame in admitting to a mistake, Speaker, no shame at all, but they just aren't listening. Look, those decisions are being made and fed to you by people—Ed Clark's name was not on a ballot. Nobody voted for Ed Clark, yet he's the guy telling you guys what to do. That ain't right. It just ain't right.

You've got to think about where we're headed. Unfortunately, the member for Ottawa South was talking about Godzilla, or Hydrozilla that used to be around. I think the Liberal government, the members, when they start running for re-election, are going to face Consumerzilla. There's going to be a lot of Consumerzillas out there saying to these guys, as the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound said, "Get off my porch. Hey, pal, get off my porch. You're doing something that you didn't tell me you were going to do, and I don't want to listen to you anymore." So thank you to the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I return to the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound for his response.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To bring comment to my colleague from London West, she brought up the idea that the PCs did. I think as a government, you have to look at all angles, you have to look at all options, particularly when a government like this has run us into the debt-hole as deep as they have. But you also have to do it with strategy, with thought process, and with trust and credibility.

We did look at it as a party. I wasn't here, but we did look at it. But you know what? We listened to the people, and we actually stepped back and said, "You know what? This doesn't make sense at this time. This isn't something that we can do today." So we stepped back; we listened to the people who brought us here, and we did.

I just want, since she wants to go back to the past, to remind her a little bit of not throwing stones, because I believe there was something called the "Rae days" that weren't really great for Ontario. Sadly, we're getting very close to that again.

The Minister of Government and Consumer Services brought up André Marin. Now, there was a gentleman who actually had oversight of accountability, and he asked a lot of hard-hitting questions. Where is he today? I don't believe he was extended a contract to be able to continue to ask those questions. In fact, they went one step closer, and they cut the oversight and accountability out of the next opportunity to do that.

He talked about the setting of rates being the OEB. Well, we all agree. Nobody is trying to paint a picture of the OEB as the bad people here. If the government runs it into shambles—think of the Green Energy Act. This government put that in place, not the OEB, but the OEB was saddled with the challenge of how we do this and

keep up with those enormous subsidies that they're giving out to many companies.

The member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills is suggesting that we will support it, with amendments. Again, I think he asked a question: How well did the Green Energy Act protect consumers? Have your rates gone down as a result of the Green Energy Act or have they gone up?

My good friend from Windsor-Tecumseh talked about \$800 million being cut. What could that do for the doctors? I believe that's about the same amount that's being cut from the doctors who provide the care to all of us in this great province.

They are not listening; they need to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: Today, I'm speaking on Bill 112, the Strengthening Consumer Protection and Electricity System Oversight Act, 2015. Now, this bill has an interesting name. You will note the word "and" in the name of the bill. That is very crucial because this is not really one bill, it's two bills—a mini omnibus bill. The government is quite fond of these bills.

One of the bills here, the one the government would like us to pay attention to, is the "Strengthening Consumer Protection" bill. That's why it comes first in the title of the bill. The second bill is further along in the title and it has the kind of name that makes even our dedicated press gallery's eyes glaze over: the "Electricity System Oversight Act." What does that mean, Speaker? I'll tell you what it means. It means a new pipeline for the government to force through more energy projects that could drive our hydro bills even higher—which is just fantastic news for Ontario industries, on the same day they are hearing that the TPP might whack tens of thousands of jobs in our automobile sector.

What this bill calls oversight is actually the opposite: The government is weakening oversight by allowing the government to bypass the Ontario Energy Board on major transmission projects. It is the Ontario Energy Board's job to verify that all transmission projects in Ontario serve the public interest. It would certainly be inconvenient if the Ontario Energy Board were to review the privatization of Hydro One, wouldn't it? Because they would surely conclude, like more than 80% of Ontarians, that the privatization of our province's electricity transmission network is a shocking—no pun intended—betrayal of the public interest.

The OEB is required currently to review and approve private sales of transmission companies to make sure they are in the public interest. Oh, dear. No wonder we're debating the bill today.

I would like to make a constructive suggestion to this government, because the members on the other side continually tell us that privatization is necessary—absolutely necessary—to ensure that Ontarians can move around, that our roads and our bridges don't crumble, and that people can find a seat or even standing room on the bus or train to go to work. What they're telling us is that

the privatization is absolutely necessary and that, therefore, it is unquestionably in the best interest of Ontarians. What is it they call it? “Repurposing of assets”—yes, in the same way I repurpose a toonie every time I go to Tim Hortons. Or the other one: “broadening ownership.” Let’s take that one. If the government is going to, ahem, “broaden the ownership,” may I suggest that it broaden the review and oversight of its plan beyond Ed Clark and the Premier’s office.

We even have a couple of institutions that are just up for the task. One was—the Auditor General, but the Auditor General is having trouble finding any of the available information because the Liberal government has blocked the Auditor General from reviewing this sale. That doesn’t sound like broadening to me.

There is another one, too: our brand new Financial Accountability Officer. Oh, but wait: The government has blocked his access to documents on the sale of Hydro One, too.

But if this is such a great deal for Ontarians, shouldn’t they be keen to have someone review the finances and give an independent thumb’s-up? And if it’s not such a good deal, I guess they won’t be so keen on accountability, will they?

It’s all fine because we do have one last line of defence, the Ontario Energy Board; they’re our last line of defence. That’s an institution that should be able to review the government’s plan for Hydro One and give us an indication of whether the deal is good for Ontarians or just for our friends on Bay Street. But, oh, here we go again, Speaker: The government is trying to bundle the OEB out of play on this file, too. Under section 92 of the existing Ontario Energy Board Act, no one may construct a transmission or distribution line without OEB approval. In most cases, this requires a public hearing—a formal review. This approval under section 96 of the act must be given if the OEB believes that the project is in the public’s interest.

The public interest is defined as “the interests of the consumer with respect to prices and the reliability and quality of electricity service” in our province. This is a line of defence for the public against the ramming through of a bad, politically motivated project with long-term consequences for electricity consumers and the people who live near these projects. But Bill 112 would allow the Lieutenant Governor in Council to bypass this public interest test by making an order declaring the transmission line is needed as a priority project. If such a declaration is made, Bill 112 states that the OEB “shall accept that the construction, expansion or reinforcement is needed when forming its opinion under” that situation.

1700

Let’s be honest here. The government already has the power it needs to initiate and champion priority transmission projects. Indeed, we have seen that it has been exercising its ample power to misguide the Ontario electricity market for years now, with inflation-busting results for hydro consumers’ bills.

There’s no reason and no need for the government to seek even more —

Hon. David Zimmer: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. David Zimmer: In his remarks, he has accused this government of misleading this House. He said “mislead.” That’s unparliamentary.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Unfortunately, I didn’t hear the member say that. I suppose Hansard will record exactly what he said. I would remind the member to ensure that his language is temperate. I look forward to the rest of his presentation.

Mr. Paul Miller: The member was wrong. I said “misguide”—different word.

Anyway, there is no reason and no need for the government to seek even more power, this time bypassing the OEB, except in order to push through more politically driven but economically disastrous boondoggles.

There are some aspects of this bill which I can support; for one, no more door-to-door sales of electricity or natural gas. That’s good. This is an excellent provision. Door-to-door sales in regard to utility contracts can be predatory, and they target the most vulnerable in our community. We’ve all heard of seniors who signed terrible and expensive contracts at the door and now find themselves trapped in the system. Door-to-door marketing will still be permitted, subject to some restrictions. That’s fine with me. We shouldn’t stop business from providing information and advertising their service with ethical limits, but we should not permit them to effectively take someone’s money at the same time.

We all know what it’s like to canvass for or between elections, but imagine if we were carrying the ballot paper with us, as well, and we told people, “Why don’t you just mark an X for me now? I’ll take it to the returning officer, and everyone’s a winner.” We wouldn’t stand for it, would we? It’s completely unacceptable on many levels. It doesn’t allow the voter—or a consumer—to make an informed choice. All they’ve heard is one side of the story, with no opportunity to verify what they’ve been told or to get an objective, unbiased analysis of their situation. If we wouldn’t stand for that behaviour in politics, we certainly shouldn’t stand for it in our electricity or gas either.

Energy contracts will now be subject to a cooling-off period of 20 days, an increase of 10. This is also good.

When it comes to natural gas marketers, they will now be subject to the same regulatory standards as electricity marketers—good.

So there will be some minimum level of clarity required when outlining prices to the consumers.

But the good aspects of the bill are heavily outweighed by the bad. How timely that this new power to force projects through would coincide with the Liberal government’s privatization of Hydro One—over a century of public investment thrown to the wind, handed over at a discount price to Bay Street bankers, with the price no doubt boosted by the knowledge that if the new corporate owners really want to get a project through, this government will be able to make sure that happens for them.

The entire privatization situation stinks. The idea that this is some great investment opportunity is little short of a farce. Hydro One is one of the most profitable—if not the most profitable—assets this provincial government has. It's a guaranteed, highly profitable revenue stream that helps fund our schools and hospitals. And yet the government is saying that this sale will improve its financial position.

How exactly will that happen? They plan to invest it in new public transit infrastructure, for one. Public transit is a very worthy and necessary asset, but no one is pretending that it's highly profitable. I believe the ridership on the one they just built to the airport is at about 10%, a little short of where they'd like to be. Most profitable situations would like to be maybe 60% to turn a profit. How are they going to pay for all of those repairs and all of those conductors and people that work in the ticket sales and all of the people that work on that system, when they've got a 10% ridership? This was going to be the answer for all the people of Toronto to get to the airport so they could fly to their destinations. But apparently they're flying by the seat of their pants or in cars to get to the airport because they don't want to pay the \$19 to go to—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's \$26.

Mr. Paul Miller: —\$26, sorry, to go to the airport. I guess friends are driving them and dropping them off. So much for fixing the congestion on our streets—not happening.

A 10% ridership? Pretty poor, I'd say. You know what? It's actually prime time coming up, when people are travelling south and flying in planes to warmer destinations. We'll see if it goes up. It may go up to 15%, if they're lucky. Now, public—

Interjection.

Mr. Paul Miller: Oh, there's the minister saying we'll mention the LRT.

You know what? If I had to rely on my money for a government by selling the only three things that make me money, which are Hydro, the liquor control board and Ontario Lottery and Gaming—they're my three biggies that bring in the money. So far we're selling Hydro, 60% of that. Next thing you know, we'll be selling the gambling. Next thing, we'll be selling all the other assets, the liquor control board. They'll say, "It's all to make Ontario a better place."

But it's like the private sector, because the bottom line is that US Steel came into Canada with all kinds of promises and it went to the private sector. They were going to maintain so much production. They were going to maintain so many employees—not, not, not. Then they locked out the employees at Lake Erie and in Hamilton and attacked their pension plans. That's in the courts. It's right down the street from where I'm going Thursday to see how the company is going to shaft 20,000 pensioners. That's the thing that happens in privatization. That's the thing that happens when you give it to the private sector. It's all about this. It's all about money, shareholders and profits. It's not about Ms. Thompson down the street who

got her hydro shut off because she can't afford it, or Bill the baker who, wherever he's going, can't afford to go there because he can't afford the system that he's running on.

They forget about the little people. They forget about the people who really need help. What they do is, they take care of all the bankers and they take care of their buddies in the Liberal Party. You know what? If you look at a lot of the appointments on these boards and these systems, well, you've got to wonder where they're coming from. They certainly aren't from my party. I'll put it that way.

The bottom line is that they want this province to work—

Interjection.

Mr. Paul Miller: He's going to build transit systems all over the province, we're going to be in debt the next 100 years, and he says the best part about that is they're going to balance the budget. Good luck. You're going to balance the budget? I've got to see that.

No one is pretending that the highly profitable public transit infrastructure requires government subsidy because it almost always loses money. Those three things that make money, they want to sell. So how are we going to pay for all of these things? Interesting.

It's an asset that benefits society more than government. Its broader social and economic return outweighs the cost to government, just like most other public infrastructure. But let me be crystal clear, Speaker: This government is selling assets that generate revenue in order to purchase assets that will require ongoing subsidies—not a good bet. It's a bad way to go. It's trading guaranteed income for guaranteed expense. This government would have failed Financial Planning 101.

This is a smoke screen, and it's a very dangerous smoke screen. They can make the case for investing in infrastructure but make a completely different case for their plan to sell Hydro One. There is no necessary connection. The only constraint here is the big one: They've racked up the provincial debt so high already through their mismanagement that they can't afford all the promises.

I can support this bill because I don't know where they think they're going to get the money from. But I've got a suggestion. They might have wanted to think about over \$3 billion they blew—I don't have to go through the list; we know what they are: Omgé, gas plants and all the things—

Interjection: eHealth.

Mr. Paul Miller: —eHealth, the MaRS deal, all of the things they've gone through. There will be more because the Pan Am bill hasn't come in yet. They tell me they're going to be on target and on budget. I've got to see this. This is going to be good when that comes in.

Speaker, you don't get out of debt by spending more and more, because there's more interest, more debt and it takes a heck of a lot longer to pay it off. There's no possible way that this government is going to balance the budget—they said in 2017? They'll be lucky if they

balance it—they won't be in power by 2025. That's if they put in full constraint right now to balance the budget. They may get it in 2025 if they don't spend any more money.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: They're not going to be here in 2018. What are you worrying about 2025 for?

Mr. Paul Miller: They won't be here. Whoever's there, good luck to you, because you're going to have one big debt to pay off.

1710

Interjection.

Mr. Paul Miller: Get off my porch, get off my property, get out of my town.

The bottom line is here; this is the way it's going to go, Speaker: When the bills start rolling in, there are going to be people rolling out, because I can guarantee you that all this speculation, all this rigmarole, all these broken promises about how hydro is going to bail them out—how do you bail somebody out with a one-time sale? It would be like if I sell my house, then I buy it back for more, then I sell it again and lose on it because the market went down. So I lost the first time and I lost the second time.

These guys are selling Hydro One thinking about this big influx of \$4 billion or \$5 billion. They make, I don't know, \$600 million a year off of hydro.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Eight hundred.

Mr. Paul Miller: Eight hundred. So let's see: 10 years would be \$8 billion roughly, but they're going to sell it for \$4 billion, the first time, the only time and the last time. We're down, what, \$6 billion or \$8 billion already, and then you go on for the next 50 years and you lose another few billion dollars—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Plus all the commissions.

Mr. Paul Miller: —the commissions and all the players that will get in. There will be all kinds of new friends and new companies and numbered companies. It will just go on and on and on, and we'll be in debt up to our ears for the next 100 years.

My great-great-grandson will still be paying for what these people are doing here today. It's brutal. It's a big mistake. Speaker, I've seen brutal mistakes in the past, but selling Hydro One is the worst mistake that this province and this Legislature has ever done in the history of this building.

If they attack any more of our assets, whether it's the liquor control board or lottery and gaming—if they go after that next, I'd like to ask them: Where are we going to get the tax base from? Where are we going to get the revenue from? You've sold it all to private interests. Do you think they care about paying money here? They'll get all the breaks and all the accountants will be working overtime to find out corporate breaks, so they don't have to pay the government money.

I'm telling you, I hope I'm not here when this building goes up for sale. I tell you, I hope I'm not here, because they're not going to get a heck of a lot for this seat or any of these seats. And do you know what? It will be a one-time sale, and then we'll be paying to come to work. It's

really good, Speaker. This is a disaster waiting to happen, and it's going to happen.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm sure the Speaker will grant me the same latitude that he has granted the member. You know, Speaker, you either accept that Ontario has a strong, urgent need to begin building transit infrastructure and begin building it right now, or you don't. If you don't, you might be the member across.

If you accept that Ontario does have that strong need to get on with building infrastructure, you either have a plan to do it or you don't. If you have a plan to do it, then you've got a means of financing it or you don't. What the member has basically said is that he doesn't accept the fact that Ontario needs to get on with building transit infrastructure, particularly here in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area. He has no plan to do it and no way to pay for it.

Speaker, let's look at some of the ways of financing that. You could, as the member has suggested, do nothing. This, of course, is the Conservative approach. You could jack up corporate, income and sales taxes, which is the NDP approach, or you could borrow it all, which is also the NDP approach. Or you could take apart what manifestly works well, which is always the Conservative approach. Or, if you accept the fact that we have a need, we have a plan and we're going to do something, you could find some value in what you already own in order to buy other assets that you can also own. I don't understand why it is that the member doesn't want Ontarians to share in what we already own through their pensions and through their investment portfolios. I have no trouble with that.

The member says that none of the information has been published, but Speaker, I'm just flipping through nearly 300 pages of an exhaustive document that publishes everything that the member has asked for. The member makes an allegation that there will be no oversight; is the member, for example, saying that the Ontario Securities Commission can't manage public companies like banks, railways and our largest industries? It makes no sense.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It's a pleasure to rise on behalf of my caucus and speak to the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek's comments.

I said before that this is certainly a bill that we would like to see get to committee and maybe make some changes to it, but it gets down to trust. I've said that before. We've had 12 years of this government, and then all of a sudden, we have to build infrastructure. They have racked up debt to such a—

Interjection: Record levels.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: —record level that they're out of borrowing room, hence the hike, and then they start selling assets. I respectfully say, a business starting to sell assets just to keep itself going is a business that's doomed. I think that's what's happening over here.

Some of the remarks about the door-to-door salesmen certainly are valid. I've had that in my riding: calls, periodically, about not only energy salesmen but siding salesmen. Home-siding salesmen are another one that come into the riding. Last summer, we had a complaint where a couple had been duped out of about \$4,000. This is something that I think consumers need and will certainly be looking forward to.

In my comments, if I get a chance to speak later on, I'll tell you about a few examples of salespersons. I used to do that a bit. I was on the road for a couple of companies before we started our own business. Certainly, there are scrupulous salespersons and there are unscrupulous salespersons.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd welcome you on my porch.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I have never been kicked off a porch, like the member opposite—as she will probably see.

Thanks, Speaker, for this opportunity to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's always a pleasure to stand and follow my buddy from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. He brings great passion to each and every debate, each and every question period, each and every time he appears in this House.

He talked about the smoke and mirrors when he started speaking. He started talking about “repurposing assets” and “broadening ownership,” which were the buzzwords from the campaign and the budget, but there was nothing in there that said absolutely, in black and white, “We will sell Ontario Hydro. Vote for me.” It didn't happen.

The member said he supports parts of this bill and only parts of it. That's a good thing because there are some good things in here, but they just don't go far enough. We talked about the UP Express, which I have taken back and forth. I liked it; it was pretty well empty. I didn't mind paying my \$26 or \$27—

Hon. Steven Del Duca: It's \$19.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's \$19 if you have a Presto card. I suppose some people—I know the member from Mississauga–Streetsville has a Presto card. I don't; I take the subway more than anything else.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Presto's on the subway, too.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I know, I know, but I don't have one; I don't have a Presto card. Most of the people flying in and out of Pearson, I would bet, don't have a Presto card, either. They're like me. If we have a staggered rate, paying \$26 or \$27—seniors get a couple of bucks off; Presto gets that down to \$19—why not give something special to the people who work at the airport and let them get on and off for \$3, the same as the subway? The price goes up on the subway, the price goes up for only the people who work at the airport. Get them using it, and then you will have some real ridership out there.

The member for Mississauga–Streetsville talked about a couple of options, but what he didn't say is, “Let's hold a referendum.” Let us hold a referendum. Ontario Hydro

was started by not one but two referendums. Let's hold another one before we sell it.

Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek for his comments on this particular piece of legislation.

I begin by saying that leading into the election of 2014—we're not that far away from that election, one year and a bit ago. In the year and longer going back from 2014, I expect that I and my constituency office in Thunder Bay–Atikokan, and other members with constituency offices, as well, were inundated with calls and complaints and anger and anxiety over issues directly related to Hydro One. I don't think, in my 12 years as a provincial member here, I can think of a single issue that dominated as much of my staff's time out of my constituency office in Thunder Bay–Atikokan and the constituency office that I have in Atikokan as well, but to a lesser extent there. They have their own distribution company there. But in the region, I can't think of one single issue in my 12-plus years that dominated as much of our time. We spent more time trying to manage that particular file.

1720

I know that the members opposite are going to say, “Look, just because they messed up on the billing issue, that's not a good enough reason to go forward with the legislation as we are.” It makes the point very clearly, Speaker, that the company has had significant challenges. They will not remind people that we're going to retain 40% ownership. I know that they won't talk about the challenges that it has had in the past. Speaker, we're retaining 40%—let's remind people of that.

When I have the discussion in my community and I very clearly say to people, “What is it about this that's concerning to you?”, they always talk about the concern around rates increasing. We talk very clearly about how, while rates have always been controlled, Hydro One never controlled rates before and they won't control them going forward. The conversation comes from here down to here almost immediately.

There's a fuller story that needs to be told here, Speaker, when it comes to this legislation. Primarily, people are concerned with rates. When you remind them about the OEB piece, the conversation comes down in temperature almost immediately, I would suggest.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek can reply.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Speaker. I'd like to thank the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, the member from Perth–Wellington, the member from Windsor–Tecumseh and the member from Mississauga–Streetsville for their comments.

Speaker, I think they were throwing a word around there a few minutes ago which is really good: presto.

Presto: Our money's gone. Presto: Hydro is owned by the private sector. Presto: They say they can only own 10%. In my short career—or long career, whatever you want to call it—I've seen things called numbered companies. To try to find out who owns that 10%, you've got to hire a forensic lawyer. At the end of the story, it comes back down to the fact that that 10% they're allowed to own ends up with one company owning 30% or 40% because they've got so many numbered companies. By the time you get to them, you're not sure who owns it, but they end up owning it and they're calling the shots from maybe a different country or they're calling the shots from somewhere on Bay Street in a secret office you don't know about. The next thing you know, the 60% that's not owned by us—and they say that you have to have 40% to control it. That's not how it's going to work.

Trust me, Speaker. The private sector doesn't work that way. They're experts at finding loopholes. They're experts at finding angles. They're expert at numbered companies. They're experts at finding a way around the system. That's why we have judges, courts and laws, because half the time we're spending most of our time—and hundreds of millions of dollars in court—trying to find these guys.

Do you remember certain guys like Bernie Madoff? He operated for a few years. Who was that other guy? Lord—

Mr. Bill Walker: Lord Black.

Mr. Paul Miller: Lord Black. There's another beauty.

Now we've got Mr. Mazza, who worked for them. He was scamming them. Mazza was scamming them and they didn't even know it until we pointed it out.

So when you say, "Trust me. We own 40% and we've got control," that's a load of malarkey.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I'm very pleased to rise today to speak on this bill. I would like to advise the chamber that I will be sharing my time. Je vais partager mon temps aujourd'hui avec le député d'Ajazz-Pickering, la députée de York South-Weston et puis le député de Sudbury.

This has been a fascinating discussion for me. As a new member, I'm always intrigued by how the different parties view different pieces of legislation and different points that we bring forward.

The one thing that I want to reinforce, as was stated so eloquently by the member from Thunder Bay-Atikokan, is that this is a very serious problem. Bill 112, the Strengthening Consumer Protection and Electricity System Oversight Act, is extremely serious. We need to do everything that we can to protect consumers in our communities.

I do have my own personal story about retailers who have come to the door and tried to make sales. It was very similar to what the Attorney General brought forward about the fellow who came to her door. This guy came forward and he wanted to know if he could talk to us about the electricity contract that we had. We said, "No, thanks. We're not interested." The next question

was, "Can I see your bill?" There was also an implication that this fellow worked for the Ontario government.

I've worked in a constituency office now for eight years: seven years on the federal side, one year as a representative. The one thing that I know is a very serious problem is what happens when elders, vulnerable people, are at the door, and people come sounding officious, looking official; they're wearing badges, identification. They feel intimidated. This bill will go a long ways towards repairing that.

I do also find it interesting that my colleague from Ottawa South brings up a similar concern, because he has also worked in a constituency office, and those are the places where we do hear about the problems that our constituents face. That very close, intimate relationship with our communities lets us know what we need to be working on, and I know that this has been an extremely serious problem.

The other thing that I find very interesting about some of the conversation that happens in this chamber is that each of the parties is obviously entrusted with bringing forward their own points of view about things. I need to go back to the name of the bill: Strengthening Consumer Protection. That's what we're here about, and we need to not get away from that fact. As much as we all try to pull in some little political angle here or there, we are here to protect the constituents in our ridings. We need to not lose sight of that.

Just in committee today, discussing Bill 9, An Act to amend the Environmental Protection Act to require the cessation of coal use to generate electricity at generation facilities—that act has been central to improving the health of Ontarians, and yet when you sit in committee, you're almost accused of being some kind of a criminal. We need to make sure that when we come together in this chamber, we are discussing real issues that affect real Ontarians at their doorstep every single day. To suggest that we're absolutely not listening to the people of Ontario—I'm sorry, but that's not quite right.

I'm very pleased that we have brought forward this legislation. I'm delighted to speak to it, and I look forward to hearing some of the other comments today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Ajax-Pickering.

Mr. Joe Dickson: It's a privilege to stand and speak on Bill 112, Strengthening Consumer Protection. Some of the terms I just have to get used to. The OEB, of course, is the Ontario Energy Board. The Ontario Energy Board Act is OEBA. We'll use those short versions. The Energy Consumer Protection Act is the ECPA. And on it goes.

It's quite interesting. I think all of our offices from all parties have been faced with queries at the front desk, where people come and they have challenges where somebody has knocked at their door, sold them a bill of goods—almost fraudulent—and gone on and taken whatever money they could. Sometimes they've installed a product, albeit inferior; sometimes they've installed a product and they were happy with it. Little did the

consumer realize that it was double the price they should have really paid.

1730

I just know that, from my office, there's a couple of ladies who bought something at their house—unbelievable. These people give their heart and soul every day to helping people, and somebody comes along and cons them, gives them a scam, and that's it. One of them was stuck with an air conditioner, and this dear soul's husband is a jail guard. I would never want to challenge him. He would probably pick me up and throw me up in the air. They got scammed.

Another lady of mine got a deck. The gentleman at the front counter never had a penny—I realize it wasn't an electric deck, but it was a deck. Her husband looked out the door in the evening and he's got an International cab-over truck, which I can tell you is probably worth \$110,000—a very poor contractor who was supposed to have an old, beat-up pickup truck and didn't have it.

Bill 112 does a lot of things. It improves the consumer advocacy through processes that give customers a direct voice in OEB proceedings. That includes enabling the cabinet to set requirements. That gives us the authority and the power to do what should be done to protect our taxpayers. I'm thinking back—and a lot of you here from all parties will remember: We tried to review this once before and we did make serious changes. Quite frankly, it wasn't enough. It should have been more, and this is the opportunity to do it. Let's put the protection clauses in place for our residents. This is to ensure the reliability and continuing service to customers.

The OEB's ability to levy penalties is major. Strengthening the OEB's oversight of utility transactions and structures is imperative. And it goes on: clarifying relationships among local distribution companies and their affiliates.

You can just look at solar as an example. Fortunately, when we put it in one of our locations, my wife had the foresight to go and check with the ministry if there were available transmission lines on the grid. There were, and we acquired—sorry, we borrowed money to buy the solar. I just want to make sure that everybody knows I didn't have the money to pay for it. All the others that she talked to—terrible. The transmission lines had just been dilapidated and not kept up. That was very unfortunate, because there you have customers paying money, can't get hooked into the grid, and the service is going out the door.

I'm not too sure how much time you want me to—

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: You've got another minute.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I've got another minute? Okay, thank you.

Now, once they got finished with that grid, it was—without my wife helping a number of people, they would have been in serious trouble.

Some of the things I'd like to mention: This is going to enhance protection for consumers who sign energy retail contracts. It's going to double the cooling-off period from 10 days back to 20 days. It's going to ban

door-to-door sales of retail electricity and gas contracts. That's what we want. Maybe if we get that done, we can go on in future bills and provide other safeguards for our residents who are being taken for “a ride,” because, Lord knows, we should be doing that for them. It's unfair.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I'm pleased to rise and to speak to Bill 112 this afternoon, the Strengthening Consumer Protection and Electricity Systems Oversight Act.

Many other members have spoken about their personal stories—I do have one to add—with energy retailers that come to the door. Many of them have also come to my door. One, in particular, came to the door in the evening hours, dressed in construction boots and overalls and a sports jacket that clearly had the word “Ontario” on it, really big, on the back and the front. They came to the door and said, “Hello, can I see your furnace?” I said, “I'm sorry, who do you work for?”

He said, “I work for the Ontario government.”

I said, “Really? Which ministry, which agency?”

He went on to say that he worked for an organization that was there to tell me that the government was giving rebates. He was ready to work. He was a salesperson, but disguised as a worker, ready to do the work and the job at that hour of the night.

Obviously, I did not let him in, but I think of all the constituents—many have come to my office, and other members have recounted the same story, asking for help after having signed something at the door. If you think of elderly people, if you think of people whose first language is not English, it's hard to say no, especially if someone says, “I'm from the government.” Sometimes they're convinced that they are getting a better deal than the one they currently have, so they are eager to sign. Then, only after showing it to their kids or to a neighbour do they realize that it isn't a good deal at all. So I'm really pleased to see that door-to-door sales will be banned with the passing of this bill.

Another thing I wanted to mention is that this bill not only aims at boosting consumer protection and improving the ability to ensure continuity of service of electricity, but also builds on the oversight that the Ontario Energy Board has. As we all know, the Ontario Energy Board functions as a quasi-judicial tribunal to protect the interests of consumers with respect to prices and the reliability and quality of service. It is the province's independent regulator. It regulates over 70 LDCs and five transmitters across the province, and in the natural gas sector, it regulates three different distributors.

I think the fact that we are strengthening the OEB's capacity of oversight, and to function as the province's regulator, is something that is needed, especially as we move forward with the changes the province is making.

Mr. Speaker, I think my time is up, and I will now pass the baton over to my colleague the MPP from Sudbury.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Sudbury.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: I'd like to thank my friends from my party for speaking to this bill before me. I am

very pleased to be able to rise and speak to Bill 112, the Strengthening Consumer Protection and Electricity System Oversight Act. I think it is very important that we speak to this and talk about how quickly this is needed for our province. I know that many individuals have already spoken about some stories that have happened in their riding, and I think I would be remiss if I didn't also address how this is happening in northern Ontario.

Many individuals would come to my constituency office and talk about some of the tactics that were being used by many of these companies, mumbling the word in front of "gas." So they weren't sure if these salespeople were from a legitimate gas company or the one that was already providing, and then providing their bills—and feeling intimidated to sign these contracts, and then not sure how much time they had to try to alleviate the contract, and calling and finding out that the contract needed some work to get cancelled.

I think that one of the important things to recognize about this specific bill—I know we have talked about many of the enhancements that are coming forward with this bill. I think it is important to emphasize that this bill is going to enhance protection for consumers who sign energy retail contracts by doubling the cooling-off period to 20 days from 10 days and requiring that all contracts are subject to a very important verification process.

1740

Another thing that I think is important to bring forward is that once this bill is enacted, once we can get this bill in place, this legislation will enable the government to do something that consumers have been requesting for some time now. They've been asking for us to ensure that we ban door-to-door sales of retail electricity and gas contracts. I think that is something important for us to bring forward.

As I know my time is slowly ticking away, I think it's important that we also look at one other aspect that was touched on earlier, I believe, by the Minister of Education and by the Deputy Premier. We're also talking about allowing cabinet to have the opportunity to ensure that critical transmission infrastructure is built. That is key.

I'd like to take you down memory lane for just a brief moment, Mr. Speaker. If we go back to August 2003, there was a tiny squirrel walking along a line. Do you know what happened to that squirrel? He fell off that line into the transmitter—boom, a blackout right across Ontario. Do you know how that happened? The PC government of the day did not invest in infrastructure or electricity at all and left our electricity grid to be destroyed by a squirrel.

It has been this government, since we've taken over, that has invested in the electricity grid, to make sure that those of us in northern Ontario have the transmission lines that are now being built. We can continue to move forward, Mr. Speaker, and make sure, with this bill, that those who need it in First Nations groups actually have the opportunity.

I hope you give me some leeway like you've given others.

They've been talking about Hydro One and the fire sale. I'd ask them to look at what "fire sale" actually means. Look it up in the dictionary. Do you know what it says? "Look at what the PC government did when they sold the 407." That is a fire sale, Mr. Speaker.

When we are looking at what we're doing with this government, we are doing the heavy lifting. We are making the tough decisions. We are very happy right now to ensure that we continue to build Ontario up.

I just made announcements in my riding of Sudbury—\$69 million in investments for northern Ontario highways.

Interjection: Infrastructure.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: That is infrastructure. That is what we are doing. That's what the people of Ontario want. That is what the people of Ontario need.

I am thrilled to be part of a government that makes sure that we look at the importance—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Windsor-Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I thought we were debating the bill, not doing cabinet auditions here this afternoon. I wonder if the member can come back to the point at hand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Well, I return to the member for Sudbury. He still has a few seconds.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Perfect. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to be able to stand up here and not audition for anything, except to speak on behalf of the people of Sudbury and all of Ontario for a government that is doing the right thing. I know that's hurtful for my friends on the other side.

This government is stepping forward, building Ontario up, and I am happy and proud to be part of this government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions or comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: That was very entertaining, to say the least.

One of my colleagues mentioned that at least we're making a little bit of progress because at least they're admitting that it's a fire sale, and at least they're actually trying to do a sale instead of two giveaways, like the power plants that we had before, which cost us billions and billions of dollars.

Let's not forget, Mr. Speaker, it is the taxpayer who's paying the freight on all of these deals.

It's consumer protection that we're supposed to be talking about today. It's a shame that there wasn't some consumer protection when a lot of these members went to the doors, on those porches that we've been talking about this afternoon, and actually told people, "We are going to sell Hydro One." I don't believe I read any of their materials that suggested there was going to be a fire sale

of Hydro One. When you're talking consumer protection, we'd really like to see you walk the talk.

I also want to chat a little bit about the Minister of Natural Resources. I have a lot of time and a lot of regard—but he was saying in his comments that there would be no increases as a result of this. They're trying to spin this so that it's the OEB that makes the increases. We get all of that, but at the end of the day, if there are increases, it doesn't matter whether it's the government or the OEB that actually signs off on the piece of paper.

I want to remind people, particularly the business people out there that know this, that the cost of the global adjustment increases as a result of the Green Energy Act. I can tell you, in my riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, Chapman's Ice Cream has a very significant global adjustment. It is very challenging to run a business like that in today's world as a result of these great deals that this government has been signing.

So we do need to protect the consumer. We do need to ensure that there are accountabilities in place. At the end of the day, we need to ensure that the government is listening to the people of Ontario so that they truly are protected and we're not selling them down the road and putting us in even more debt than their Liberal 12 years have proven.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Several of the members on the government side spoke to this legislation this afternoon. Many have shared personal stories about how constituents have been harmed by energy—electricity—retailers' unethical and aggressive sales tactics. I think that it's great that the government is listening to constituents and wants to take action to address their concerns. My question is: Why are they not listening to the 80% of Ontarians who don't want the sale of Hydro One to go through? Why are they not listening to the 170 municipalities that have passed municipal resolutions to stop this sale? Instead, we have the member from Sudbury actually quite proud of the fact that this legislation removes OEB oversight from critical or priority transmission projects, just like one would categorize the sale of Hydro One.

In fact, we are very concerned that this legislation is not about protecting consumers. This legislation is about helping the government move forward without—removing any impediments from its planned sale to privatize Hydro One that is opposed by people throughout this province. In fact, if the government was serious about consumer protection, they would look at the private member's bill that has already been debated, that has already been passed, that is waiting at committee to be addressed by Ontarians. That's what they would do to end predatory practices in the electricity retailing sector and actually do something to protect consumers instead of this packaged bill that gives on the one hand and takes away hugely on the other.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: It's a real pleasure to stand and return the conversation a little bit to the comments made by my colleagues on this side of the House during their 20-minute session this afternoon.

Of course, they have been emphasizing the most important part of this bill, which is strengthening consumer protection. Of course, this has been a top priority for our government. We introduced the Energy Consumer Protection Act in 2010, and since that time, we have seen some improvements; there are far fewer complaints against retailers in the gas and electricity area. Of course, this bill is now going to take things a step further.

With banning door-to-door sales, as we've already heard, this is a very important step forward. We've all heard the stories, especially in relation to seniors. When people knock at their door, sometimes they are very trusting and maybe a little bit lonely, so they invite people in. They can sign up for things that they really didn't intend to at all. So not only have we banned the door-to-door sales of retail and electricity gas contracts, but we're also giving the opportunity to consumers who sign energy retail contracts to have a cooling-off period, that we've, in fact, doubled from a period of 10 days to 20 days. So I think this is very important.

There was a great deal of consultation in terms of the development of this bill. The Minister of Energy hosted focus groups, elicited input from online workbooks and surveyed current and former energy contract holders and non-contract holders. This was a very thorough type of consultation process, and clearly, this bill is incorporating all these ideas and will protect consumers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm glad to add comment to the debate put on by the government. It's unfortunate that the member from Sudbury resorted to polemics instead of talking about the issue at hand. You would think that he would stick to the bill, given the fact that this government is painting all the salespeople in this province with one brush. I think that's unfortunate. There are the bad eggs out there; my office has heard the bad stories going on, of people being taken advantage of. However, to paint an entire profession or group of people, some of them for whom the only way of making money is selling door to door, with one brush I think is foolish and ridiculous for this government to do.

It's just what they're doing to the doctors. They're painting the doctors as all these money-grubbing professionals who get paid too much. This government is stepping forward and taking people down the direction of the fact that they're saying the doctors pocket the entire amount of billings they receive from OHIP, when, in fact, we know that it goes to pay for rent, pay for staff, pay for their eHealth. It goes forward and pays for the family health teams to hire other staff.

For this government to paint salespeople with one brush, that they're all bad people—I guess they're taking a page from how they're painting health professionals with one brush. It's unfortunate that they have to head

down this time and time again. This government, time and time again, comes out with, “We’re helping out Ontarians,” with these bills they bring forth. I do have to say—I’m going to quote Ronald Reagan here—the nine scariest words you can hear in the English language are, “I’m from the government and I’m here to help.” Stop helping the people of Ontario, please.

Mr. Bill Walker: Get off my porch.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Get off my porch. I’m sure you’re going to hear that in the next election. I’m so thankful that two and half years from now we’ll be at the polls so we can get rid of this government, we can bring Ontario back to the forefront, we can reinstate better hydro prices. Thank goodness for the people of Ontario. This day is finishing because we’ve had enough. We’ve had enough—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. That concludes our time for questions and comments. I return the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound—sorry. Again, my mistake; I apologize. He’s already had his chance. I misread my notes; sorry.

I return to the member for Sudbury.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: No problem, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much. I would like to thank my friends, the honourable member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound—I found out that Chapman’s Ice Cream is in his riding, so I’m looking forward to the day that we have a Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound day on the hill here at Queen’s Park—the honourable member for London West, the Minister of Community and Social Services and my colleague from Elgin–Middlesex–London.

I’m going to speak specifically to the comments made by my friend across the way from Elgin–Middlesex–London, which really reiterates the point to me that they should read the bill, because he’s talking about how we’re clumping them all into one group.

Let me quote some points here, Mr. Speaker. Some of the important findings from a report by the Ontario Energy Board that helped us draft this legislation talk about the need for better energy literacy for consumers; consumers were unhappy with their experiences with aggressive door-to-door sales practices. Energy retailers can still play a productive role in Ontario’s energy sector, as they provide consumers with choices about who provides their electricity or natural gas. They offer choice to a segment of consumers who either want fixed rates or are seeking to purchase renewable or carbon-offset energy. They can also offer products in conjunction with the fixed-rate electricity contract that can help households conserve energy, like dynamic thermostats.

You know what? There are a lot of positive things that are coming out from this bill. We will make sure that we protect our consumers in this great province of ours. We will ensure that we do this while we do the heavy lifting on all of the other bills and other projects that we’re putting forward. With that, I know my time is up and I’d like to thank everyone once again for their comments.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being very close to 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1754.

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Taras Natyshak, Peggy Sattler
Laurie Scott, Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

International Plowing Match	
Mr. Jim McDonell	5562
Davenport-Perth Neighbourhood and Community Health Centre	
Mrs. Cristina Martins	5562
Senior citizens / Personnes âgées	
Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde	5562

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

Ontario Agriculture Week	
Hon. Jeff Leal	5562
Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	5563
Mr. John Vanthof	5564
Correction of record	
Ms. Jennifer K. French	5565

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Ontario Retirement Pension Plan	
Mr. Bill Walker	5565
Gasoline prices	
Mme France Gélinas	5565
Water fluoridation	
Mr. Bob Delaney	5565
Ontario Retirement Pension Plan	
Mr. Jim McDonell	5566
Privatization of public assets	
Ms. Jennifer K. French	5566
Lung health	
Mr. Arthur Potts	5566
Health care funding	
Mr. Norm Miller	5567
Privatization of public assets	
Ms. Peggy Sattler	5567
Public transit	
Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde	5567
Taxation	
Mr. Bill Walker	5567
Privatisation des biens publics	
Mme France Gélinas	5567
Employment standards	
Mr. Arthur Potts	5568
Wind turbines	
Mr. Jim McDonell	5568
Hospital funding	
Mme France Gélinas	5568

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Strengthening Consumer Protection and Electricity System Oversight Act, 2015, Bill 112, Mr. Chiarelli / Loi de 2015 pour renforcer la protection des consommateurs et la surveillance du réseau d'électricité, projet de loi 112, M. Chiarelli	
Mr. Peter Tabuns	5569
Mr. Bob Delaney	5572
Mr. Monte McNaughton	5572
Ms. Jennifer K. French	5572
Mr. Bas Balkissoon	5573
Mr. Peter Tabuns	5573
Hon. Ted McMeekin	5573
Hon. Deborah Matthews	5574
Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde	5574
Mr. Arthur Potts	5575
Mr. Jeff Yurek	5576
Ms. Jennifer K. French	5576
Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris	5577
Mr. Arthur Potts	5577
Mr. Monte McNaughton	5577
Ms. Jennifer K. French	5580
Mrs. Cristina Martins	5581
Mr. Bill Walker	5581
Mr. Percy Hatfield	5581
Mr. Monte McNaughton	5582
Ms. Peggy Sattler	5582
Mr. Bob Delaney	5584
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	5584
Mr. Percy Hatfield	5585
Mr. Lou Rinaldi	5585
Ms. Peggy Sattler	5585
Hon. Liz Sandals	5586
Mr. John Fraser	5587
Mr. Yvan Baker	5587
Mr. Michael Harris	5588
Mr. Paul Miller	5589
L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur	5589
Mr. Norm Miller	5589
Mr. John Fraser	5590
Mr. Bill Walker	5590
Ms. Peggy Sattler	5593
Hon. David Oraziatti	5594
Mr. Jack MacLaren	5594
Mr. Percy Hatfield	5594
Mr. Bill Walker	5595
Mr. Paul Miller	5595
Mr. Bob Delaney	5598
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	5598
Mr. Percy Hatfield	5599

Hon. Bill Mauro.....	5599
Mr. Paul Miller	5599
Ms. Sophie Kiwala	5600
Mr. Joe Dickson.....	5600
Mrs. Laura Albanese.....	5601
Mr. Glenn Thibeault	5601
Mr. Bill Walker.....	5602
Ms. Peggy Sattler.....	5603
Hon. Helena Jaczek	5603
Mr. Jeff Yurek	5603
Mr. Glenn Thibeault	5604
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.....	5604

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Monday 5 October 2015 / Lundi 5 octobre 2015

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky	5549
Hon. Michael Chan	5549
Mr. Chris Ballard	5549
Mr. Bob Delaney	5549
Mr. Michael Mantha	5549
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	5549
Mr. Yvan Baker	5549
Mr. Jeff Yurek	5549
Hon. Deborah Matthews	5549
Hon. Eric Hoskins	5549
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	5549
Mr. Monte Kwinter	5549
Hon. Glen R. Murray	5549
Mme France Gélinas	5549
Fatal traffic accident	
Ms. Jennifer K. French	5549

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Executive compensation

Mr. Patrick Brown	5550
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	5550
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	5550

By-election in Sudbury

Mr. Patrick Brown	5551
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	5551
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	5551

Privatization of public assets

Ms. Andrea Horwath	5552
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	5552

By-election in Sudbury

Ms. Andrea Horwath	5552
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	5552

Housing Services Corp.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman	5553
Hon. Ted McMeekin	5553

Privatization of public assets

Mr. Peter Tabuns	5554
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	5554

Road safety

Ms. Eleanor McMahon	5555
Hon. Steven Del Duca	5555

Ontario economy

Mr. Victor Fedeli	5555
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	5555
Hon. Eric Hoskins	5556

Home care

Mme France Gélinas	5556
Hon. Eric Hoskins	5556

Ontario Retirement Pension Plan

Mr. Joe Dickson	5556
Hon. Mitzie Hunter	5556

Ontario Retirement Pension Plan

Mrs. Julia Munro	5557
Hon. Mitzie Hunter	5557

Mineral exploration and production

Mr. Michael Mantha	5558
Hon. Michael Gravelle	5558

International trade

Ms. Harinder Malhi	5558
Hon. Michael Chan	5558

Long-term care

Mr. Bill Walker	5559
Hon. Dipika Damerla	5559

Health care funding

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	5559
Hon. Eric Hoskins	5560

Notice of dissatisfaction

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	5560
-------------------------------------	------

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Max Keeping

Ms. Lisa MacLeod	5560
------------------------	------

Economic development

Ms. Peggy Sattler	5560
-------------------------	------

Max Keeping

Mr. John Fraser	5560
-----------------------	------

Hospital funding

Mr. Todd Smith	5561
----------------------	------

Taxi industry

Mr. Jagmeet Singh	5561
-------------------------	------

Events in Beaches–East York

Mr. Arthur Potts	5561
------------------------	------

Continued on inside back cover

X1
- D23



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Tuesday 6 October 2015

Mardi 6 octobre 2015



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 6 October 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 6 octobre 2015

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROTECTING CONDOMINIUM OWNERS ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LA PROTECTION DES PROPRIÉTAIRES DE CONDOMINIUMS

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 24, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 106, An Act to amend the Condominium Act, 1998, to enact the Condominium Management Services Act, 2015 and to amend other Acts with respect to condominiums / Projet de loi 106, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur les condominiums, édictant la Loi de 2015 sur les services de gestion de condominiums et modifiant d'autres lois en ce qui concerne les condominiums.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to rise and add the voice of my constituents from Windsor West to the debate about Bill 106, Protecting Condominium Owners Act.

I'd like to start with a bit of a background on this bill. There are about 1.3 million Ontarians who live in condos and half of all new homes being built are condos. I can tell you, Speaker, that probably the majority of those condos are being built here in the greater Toronto area. In Windsor and, specifically, in my riding of Windsor West, we don't see an awful lot of high-rise condo buildings going up.

Interjection.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: No, I suppose it wouldn't be the same in yours either.

What we see in my riding, and all across Windsor and Essex county, are often these beautiful homes going up, or cottage-like homes going up because, as you know, Speaker, we have this beautiful waterfront that draws people from all over the province. A lot of people want to come and retire; a lot of people come and buy homes as their cottages. They're not a traditional cottage, they're actually what someone would live in year-round and they're on the waterfront.

I'd like to boast about the fact that in Windsor and Essex county—I suspect it would be the same in your area, Speaker—housing prices are quite affordable. So when I'm speaking to this particular bill about protecting condominium owners, I will admit I'm a little bit out of my element because this is not something that we're seeing. We're not seeing condos popping up all over Windsor and Essex county; what we're seeing are single-family homes, so I'm going to do my best to get through this in the 10 minutes.

Similar to a municipal government, condo residents pay taxes, or condo fees, and abide by bylaws. Condo governance is basically a fourth level of government for these people, and the Condominium Act is like the Constitution and the Charter of Rights for this level of quasi government.

The condo act is 16 years old and predates the recent condo boom. That's something that I had touched on: There seems to be a condo boom in the greater Toronto area—not just here in Toronto, but you see it spread out into Mississauga, Oakville and probably up Oshawa way, where my colleague is from. In fact, last night, I was just walking down Yonge Street here, and it amazes me the number of condos they're building along the Yonge Street corridor and how much that has changed. I used to come with my family when I was a little younger than I am now, and Yonge Street looked very different.

Interjection.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Yes, just a little younger, Speaker.

It's amazing to see the difference in the area, specifically Yonge Street and the number of condos that are popping up. Even by the building that I stay in here—the condo that I stay in when I'm here in Toronto—there is a building going up behind me, and there's another building that's just in the works across the street from the building where I am.

We need to make sure that as people are buying these condominiums, they're protected; that what they've agreed to, what they are investing their money in, is actually what they are going to receive. The issue is that, all too often, we see people spend—again, I'll go back to the cost of living in the GTA. It's very different than the cost of living in Windsor. It's a very substantial amount of money that people are investing in condominiums in this area. We need to make sure that when they are making that big investment, that when they're promised they are going to have a gym in the building, that gym is actually there, and it's there as promised; that it's not just a couple of machines, that it's actually the gym that's

promised. We need to make sure that when someone spends the money to upgrade the cabinets or the countertops in their condominium, those are actually the products that they receive. Again, this is a big investment for people, many who are struggling to make ends meet but want to become homeowners, want to invest in a property that they know they are going to get a return on. We need to make sure that the money that they are spending is money well spent and that they're getting everything that they were promised.

The NDP has been pushing hard for these much-needed reforms that are in this bill, ever since NDP MPP Rosario Marchese's first condo bill in 2007. These efforts met inexplicable resistance from the government, which kept insisting that such reforms were unnecessary. But eight years, eight consumer ministers and two Premiers later, we finally have a bill that addresses some of the concerns that my former colleague had brought forward several times.

The bill includes important and much-needed reforms to condo board governance and finance. Condo owners will benefit from greater training and assistance for condo board directors; and the owners will have more power to see important corporation documents, to request meetings and to ensure that large expenditures do not occur without consultation or notification of the owners. The NDP has long supported such reforms, and it's really good, Speaker, to see that the government has finally acknowledged the need for them.

We need to make sure that condo owners have a voice, that when something isn't done as promised, they have a venue to go and express their concerns and have them dealt with in a timely manner. We don't want to see people having to go back over and over again for years and say, "This wasn't right when it was built; it needs to be fixed; it's not what I paid for." We don't want them having to have that battle over and over again for years. When something is not done right, it needs to be fixed right away. There has to be some recourse for condo owners.

What's in this bill is reasonably good, Speaker, but the NDP—my colleagues on this side of the room—are concerned about what's not in the bill. The condominium authority, at this time, must actually make the dispute resolution process quicker and cheaper. So, as I had said, when somebody does have an issue when something is not built as promised, they need to have those concerns addressed in a timely manner. They shouldn't have to wait for a really long time to have them—or sometimes not at all; sometimes they're not addressed at all. It must not become an ineffective bureaucracy that only adds to costs and delays for condo owners. The effectiveness of the condo authority will depend on regulations that still are not written in this bill.

0910

The NDP also welcomes condo manager licensing. It's too bad the government did not implement this reform two years ago when it announced plans to fast-track this universally supported reform. It looks like we'll have to

wait a little bit longer for further regulations, and these will determine how much recourse, how much teeth the condo manager licensing authority will actually have.

Many of the details of Bill 106 will depend on future regulations. We saw how the condo act review process was dominated by special interests from the condo industry and not owners. That's really unfortunate, Speaker, because the developers, the condo industry, are doing a pretty good business, specifically in the GTA. We need to make sure that the people who are struggling to save money to purchase a condo, an investment, a lifetime investment—we have to make sure that we're not catering to those who are building these condos and making the money that they're making. We need to make sure that the people who are investing in these condos are getting a good investment, getting a good return for their money. They should really be the ones who have the louder voice when it comes to their real estate, not the people who are building the condos.

So, as I said, the condo owners, not the industry, really should be playing the lead role in how the regulations are developed. I think you've heard, probably time and time again from this side of the room, that really the public, the people who are investing, should be the ones who should be spoken to and listened to at great length, to hear what it is they need and make sure they're getting what it is they are asking for.

I know my time is almost up here. I thought I'd have difficulty speaking to this because, as I said, we don't really have a lot of condos going up in Windsor, but I find that once you get into it, there is a lot to discuss.

I'd like to just touch on some of the stakeholder responses. They said that there needs to be more transparency for contract procurement, including knowing the names of bidders, in order to discourage bid rigging. Again that goes back to the fact that this is a really, really large investment for many, many people, and we need to make sure that the deck isn't stacked against them. We can't have it where we have developers or someone from the outside who is purposely bidding just to raise the price when they really have no intention of ever wanting to own that condo; they're doing it only to drive up the cost for the person who will actually end up with it and increase the profits for those who build the condos.

As I see about 30 seconds left on the clock, I know I have other colleagues who would like to speak to this, and I'm sure that they'll build more on where I'm leaving off. Again, the main concern for me, on this side of the room, is making sure that those who are investing the money in these condominiums are being listened to, that they're being given what they were promised when they invested in the condos and that it doesn't take a long time for a resolution when they do have a concern.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments? The minister responsible for seniors.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Good morning, Speaker. You look good in the chair.

I have listened very attentively to the comments from the member from Windsor West, and I have to say that

she has advanced several issues related to condominiums and the difficulties that condominium owners experience with their units.

I have to compliment, as well, the minister for bringing this piece of legislation forward, as it is very timely and much needed. I hope that, through the consultation process, we can indeed hear more from the various stakeholders and bring back an even better bill than what is being presented.

I have my share of condominiums in my area, let alone the experience I've had over the years with respect to condominium management and owners and boards. I think that's where most of the problems lie: with the internal management of the various buildings themselves. If there is frustration on the part of the owners of the various units in a building, it is with the management, it is with the board that manages the operation of the building, the difficulties in arranging meetings, the difficulties in getting hold of the board, not enough consultation within the building itself. It is impossible, almost, to call a meeting of all of the owners because of the various ownerships probably left in the hands of the original builder. There is a lot of concern with it.

I hope we can get this bill through as soon as possible and make it, indeed, something that will help the condominium owners in the city of Toronto and the province of Ontario.

I think I have done my time just on time; look at this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments? The member from Leeds–Grenville, the deputy leader for the official opposition.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thanks, Speaker. That's very kind of you to note.

Interjections.

Mr. Steve Clark: Boy, I'm getting heckled from my introduction. I was going to say we should rename today "Together Tuesday" because we all seem to be together when it comes to Bill 106. That is the first time I've ever heard of getting heckled over an introduction, so I've learned something new.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: It's about your tie.

Mr. Steve Clark: This tie? You like my tie? The Minister of Community Safety has complimented—I call this tie a Fedeli, because of my seatmate, Vic Fedeli.

I want to thank the member for Windsor West. I thought her comments this morning were excellent and really representative, I think, of how the three parties feel about this bill. Normally a bill that, in this case, creates a couple of different authorities would get a comment from me against increasing red tape and bureaucracy. However, I think we all agree that there are a number of new consumer and financial protection measures that are included with this bill.

Obviously, a bill of this type needs extensive consultation, and I know that the government has done some. I'm glad that the member noted Mr. Marchese, as well, because it was something that he was exceptionally passionate about in the House. I think we all agree that we need to have a different system. Many ministers since

1998 have failed to bring in legislation that would improve condominiums and their structure and framework.

It's interesting. I had a conversation this morning with our House leader, Mr. Wilson, where he noted that he is hearing more and more advertisements now for education programs for boards of directors for condos, for condo managers. I think the industry is getting ready for this piece of legislation to be passed. I would expect, knowing the government and their guillotine motions, we'll have a closure motion on this, probably tomorrow, and move the bill forward.

I want to thank the member for Windsor West and look forward to the other debate this morning.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is always interesting to listen to my colleague from Windsor West and how she had this opportunity to bring her voice to this debate.

It is a debate that has been going on for a very long time, Speaker. I was here in 2007 when Rosario started to talk about it. Rosario Marchese was an NDP MPP from Trinity–Spadina. He had lots of condos in his riding, and he was bringing forward serious issues that were happening eight years ago, in 2007. Fast-forward to 2015 and I'm glad we've got Bill 106, the government's bill, but even some of these issues that were identified by Rosario eight years ago are still not addressed in the bill. Why is it that we have to wait for such a long time to take just a half-step to solve the issues that we all know exist?

What is in the bill are steps in the right direction. That makes sense, to make sure that there is an inexpensive way for owners and boards to resolve their disputes. We're all for this, Speaker. But the elephant in this bill, if you want, is that there is nothing about developers—when there are seven class action lawsuits in Toronto alone against developers. When we open up the part of the bill that has to do with the new homes act, why is it that we don't take the time to solve the entire problem, not just part of it?

So I thank the member for Windsor West for bringing her concerns forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?
0920

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I'm very pleased to stand in support of Bill 106, our government's Protecting Condominium Owners Act. I think, as I heard from the comments made by the parties opposites, that overall, everyone is very pleased to see this bill here. It clearly is extremely comprehensive, covering so many different aspects that, of course, it has taken a certain amount of time and consultation—which, in my view, has been incredibly wide-ranging—to get this bill to this particular place in the form that it is in.

It has so many protective aspects: increasing the protections for condo owners and Ontarians purchasing a condo, requiring condominium managers to be licensed,

creating new governance requirements for condo boards, strengthening the financial sustainability of condo buildings, and establishing a modern, cost-effective dispute resolution system.

In my great riding of Oak Ridges–Markham, I have over 250,000 people who live in my riding—a very, very large riding. Actually, it's kind of a sprawling riding. In fact, there are very few condominium buildings as yet, but I know that they're going to come because of our government's legislation related to Places To Grow and to the protection of the greenbelt. Of course, we're going to see some intensification in my riding. So I'm particularly pleased that these types of protections will be in place as these condominium buildings come into the great riding of Oak Ridges–Markham, and my constituents will have the type of protections that we see in this particular act.

Some 50% of all new construction of homes is through the condominium mechanism.

This is a good bill, I urge everyone to support it, and I look forward to hearing comments from the parties opposite.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Windsor West for her final comments.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I'd like to thank the minister responsible for seniors affairs, the member from Leeds–Grenville, my colleague from Nickel Belt and the Minister of Community and Social Services for adding their comments to what I had to say.

I find it interesting that the Minister of Community and Social Services had mentioned that it's taken a certain amount of time to consult with people and to come up with the bill, but we're talking eight years—eight years to make some reforms.

What's sorely lacking in the bill—yes, we are generally supportive of the bill, but we see that there needs to be more. There definitely need to be more voices from this room added to it. There are things that are missing from the bill; for instance, there's no Taron reform. The act requires Taron to maintain a builder registry, enforce builder warranties and make sure new homes are built to the building code, are habitable and are built to a decent standard of workmanship. If the builder doesn't honour the warranty, then Taron is required to pay for the repair.

The big “but” here is that under Taron's bylaw number one, which has the same status as a provincial regulation, half of the board for Taron must be appointed by the Ontario Home Builders' Association, which is a construction industry lobby group.

Basically, what we're saying is we're putting the fox in the henhouse. The government's saying they want some oversight, but half of the board that provides that oversight is appointed by the very people that are building these condos. I'm not saying that all builders are not building to standards; that they are going to run around ripping people off—that's not what I'm saying. What I'm saying is there is the potential for someone who maybe does not have the best interest of the condo owner to take advantage of the process. So we would really like to see a

review of Taron put into this bill to make sure that those checks and balances are in place.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? I recognize the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Good morning, Speaker. Thank you very much for recognizing me to speak on this very important issue, Bill 106, Protecting Condominium Owners Act.

A couple of points before I get into why this issue is important for me from my perspective as the member of provincial Parliament for the great riding of Ottawa Centre.

What I wanted to say, first of all, Speaker, is that this issue is a very good example of how this Legislature should work, and that is that all members come together with their ideas, bring them forward, followed by extensive consultation to listen to Ontarians, and then government takes action in bringing legislation forward that is comprehensive in nature.

I do want to recognize all members, especially the former member for Trinity–Spadina for the work he did when he was in this House, given that he had a lot of condominiums in his community, the same as my community. I had many conversations with him about some of the challenges that I was hearing. I think, again, it speaks to the collaborative nature of the work we do in this House, where we learn from each other, we bring unique perspectives from our respective communities, and then advocate on behalf of our constituents. That results in bills like Bill 106, which is a good thing.

I have the great honour of representing Ottawa Centre, which is a downtown community. I think all of you have had the chance to visit my community. If you look at my community of Ottawa Centre and if you look at the Attorney General's community of Ottawa–Vanier, you will see this incredible growth that is taking place in terms of building new condominiums.

As we are going through the electoral boundaries change, my riding boundaries are not changing—if anything, it's shrinking by two streets—but the population of my riding continues to grow, because what we are seeing in my riding is the building of vertical neighbourhoods: condo towers that are being built in various neighbourhoods that are 20, 25, 30, or up to 40 floors high. If you are in Ottawa Centre and you're visiting Dow's Lake, you will see those skyscrapers. You will see the cranes and the construction that is happening. If you're in Westboro, you will see construction taking place around the convent property. Most recently, in Old Ottawa East, we have this new development called Greystone Village, which is taking place on the Oblates land that was owned by the Oblates brothers for over 100 years and is now being sold by the brothers and is being developed in consultation with the community.

So it's interesting, while you see the actual physical boundary of my riding remaining the same, we're seeing incredible growth in the number of people who will be living in condominiums and are choosing that lifestyle of

not owning a house and having obligations around shovelling snow and bringing garbage to the curbside, but choosing a different lifestyle. They are actually investing quite a bit of money in doing so.

We're very proud of that development. We're very proud of welcoming new members in our community through these condo developments, but with it also comes certain responsibilities and issues that are being dealt with through this particular bill, Bill 106.

Just to give you a sense of the condominium market in Ottawa, 2014 was a record year for condo completions in Ottawa, with about 2,412 units coming onto the market. I would argue that the bulk of those units were either in my riding of Ottawa Centre, or were in the riding of Ottawa-Vanier, which is represented by the Attorney General. So far, in 2015, there are 2,037 units under construction. The average sale price for a condominium-class property increased by 1.3% this past quarter in Ottawa to \$257,303, making it an affordable option for young professionals and seniors. Condo sales in Ottawa account for about 23% of housing sales in our city. It's a lifestyle that is being availed of by both young professionals and seniors—a lot of what we call empty nesters.

I was very happy to see that the government took very extensive consultation on this process. In fact, I was pleased to host, in 2012, a consultation in my riding along with then-Minister of Government and Consumer Services Margaret Best. We held the consultation at the Taggart Family YMCA/YWCA. It was very well-attended; over 100 people were there raising different issues that they've had.

0930

The issue that really stuck in my mind, one of the issues that came up, was education around condo living, what it entails in terms of rights and responsibilities of condominium owners who live in condos; and education for board members who take on that responsibility as volunteers to look after the affairs of that particular community of condominium owners; and then any disputes that arise as a result of it, because you're making collective decisions. Those I would characterize as some of the key issues that came out in that consultation.

I'm really happy to see that Bill 106 actually tackles all those important issues. It has a huge emphasis on protecting the consumer, because it is a very large purchase that individuals are making, especially if you are first-time homebuyer, if you are a young professional in your late twenties or early thirties and you are buying a condominium. We need to make sure that there are a certain elements of protection for you there: things like requiring developers to give condo buyers a copy of an easy-to-read guide on condominium living at the time of sale and providing clear, more comprehensive rules to prevent buyers from being surprised by unexpected costs after purchasing a newly built condo. These are the kinds of things, Speaker, that are very important because they will result in educated condo owners.

What I want to focus my time on is dispute resolution. One of the biggest challenges that I've heard in my riding

of Ottawa Centre is the cost around dispute resolution. If there is a challenge between the condo board and some of the residents—and we've had some really high-profile cases in my riding. We're talking about years of litigation in the courts and hundreds of thousands of dollars in legal fees that people have encountered. That is just money coming out of the condo fund, the reserve fund, the money that has been collected so that it could be invested back in that condo in terms of upgrades and repairs. That does not serve anything well.

One of the key features that I really support, and heard from my constituents that they are very happy to see, that came out of part of that consultation is having a separate dispute resolution mechanism, through the establishment of a condominium authority. That is a very positive move because what it does is it creates a specialized body which will be able to resolve disputes that may take place within a condominium. It takes the pressure away from our court system; it helps resolve condo issues in a low-cost manner; and it really puts a focus on not having an adversarial, litigious process but a process that is more driven through alternative dispute resolution mechanisms like mediation. That is a very positive step which I think will save a lot of money and time and will ensure that condo disputes are being resolved in a timely manner.

The condo authority will provide affordable access to quicker, accessible and lower-cost dispute resolution of disputes primarily between corporations and owners. It will provide for self-help tools, case management and mediation to prevent easy-to-solve disputes from being tied up in costly and time-consuming legal proceedings. It will also ensure education and awareness, as I was mentioning earlier, for condo owners about their rights and responsibilities and the basics of condo living and how it differs from freehold ownership. It will also provide education for condominium directors, which is very important; a registry of all condominium corporations in Ontario, including their boards of directors and contact information; and a guide for condominium buyers setting out unit owners' rules and responsibilities.

I think all these steps are positive steps, they are steps in the right direction, because they really acknowledge a unique lifestyle around condominium living. It also acknowledges that this is in many ridings—like mine, Ottawa Centre—a very acceptable way of living as opposed to freehold living. We need to have special rules in place to accommodate for that.

I also want to quickly thank the Canadian Condominium Institute and the Association of Condominium Managers of Ontario, ACMO, for their advocacy. They've been very helpful in educating me on a lot of these issues. I want to thank them because a lot of positive things are reflected that we learned from our stakeholders, from our condominium owners, our constituents and, of course, through the consultations.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a pleasure to engage in debate. I'll have an opportunity a little later from now to add more points to this debate.

First, I'd like to thank the member from Ottawa Centre, who is the Minister of Community Safety and the government House leader, for his work on condo development and legislation. In addition, I think that no one should start their remarks on this piece of legislation without paying due homage to our friend from Trinity-Spadina, the former member Rosario Marchese, who almost became known as Condo Rosie around these parts for the time he spent here for his advocacy for those in Toronto who were living in condominiums.

I often would listen to him, as I have the member from Ottawa Centre, who is the government House leader, because I have one of the fastest-growing ridings in all of Ontario, if not Canada. As a result of that explosive growth, what we have seen is massive development for single-family-home dwellings but also, more recently, in terms of condominiums. Therefore, I think it's imperative that we have a conversation and that we update the legislation, which hasn't been updated since 1998.

So as we arrive near that 20-year mark—it's about 17 years since the initial legislation was first put in place—it is actually time for us to have those conversations. I don't need to reiterate the stats and the facts that the member opposite just raised with respect to our home region and our home city of Ottawa, where he does have, I would say, the predominant growth in terms of condo development, but I think it is fair to say that over the past 15 years, we have seen an emergence in this type of market. Therefore, I think it's relevant for us in this assembly to talk about greater protection for those who live in condominiums and who are considering purchasing condominiums.

I guess I'm finished. Thank you very much, Speaker, for the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Once again, it's a privilege and a pleasure to join this debate. Being here as the MPP for London-Fanshawe is truly an honour, and being part of a democratic process. I know we have talked about this bill for some time, but I always enjoy listening to people's different perspectives.

One of the things I wanted to point out in this bill is that the province did a condo review and they reached out. I don't know how far and wide it was, but a lot of the people who were contacted or contributed to that review were people in the condo industry—special interests. It is a little disappointing that the majority of those people weren't the condo owners, because, really, what this bill does is it affects people living in condos, their day-to-day life. Your home is probably one of the more important investments that you will acquire in your life, and you want to make sure that when you're there, you know your rights and you know your obligations to the condo board and to the other condo owners; that education is so key.

The part that I have questions about is that some of this bill, a lot of this bill, is left up to regulation. I know there is a condo authority, a new position that's being implemented, so that's a good thing. I just hope that there

is going to be a lot of outreach to condo owners to be involved so that they know what's going on in the board, and that way, it will help prevent these disputes, perhaps, because education is really the key to understanding your obligations and responsibilities where you live.

So I'm glad to see the bill has come to the House. We talked about it. It's a long time coming. It is a step in the right direction. I hope that when it does go to committee, there will be a lot of condo owners coming forward and talking about their concerns so that we can hear their perspective.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments.

Mr. Arthur Potts: It's a pleasure to be able to comment on my colleague's debate on this bill, the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, particularly because it's such a well-reasoned discussion. As he goes through and talks about the very detailed development of new condos in his community, he gives me a shining example of what a good MPP can do. Despite his ministerial responsibility and his work as the government House leader, he also takes his responsibility as an MPP in Ottawa Centre very seriously, particularly the consultations you have been able to do in your own community. As a new member, I look to that and know that's the kind of work I have to continue to do in my community.

But I do have a bit of a bone to pick with the member, my colleague, in that my daughter Dara Potts is a constituent; she goes to Carleton University. She is enjoying the community that the member represents so much, the Glebe particularly. She is what he calls one of those in the vertical neighbourhood—the fourth floor of a multi-residential community. She won't come home, she loves it so much there. She is working for the summer—

Interjection.

0940

Mr. Arthur Potts: It could be the push, it could be the pull. You never really know.

She enjoys so much living in that community because of the great work that he has done to keep the Glebe—what a wonderful, wonderful area; I love to visit with her up there as much as I can.

I'm particularly interested, though, in a piece of this legislation that I haven't heard talked about so far: this issue of licensing condo managers. It is so incredibly important that you recognize that as constituents who are living in condos—there is a whole new set of issues that come up. In rental buildings issues about maintenance and rent increases and such are one issue, but there is a whole new category of constituent complaints, and one of those is about the kind of management that is in the building which is looking after a significant amount of money in the accumulated fees of a condo. To protect the consumer and make sure those monies are being spent efficiently and effectively, it's a great idea that we should license condo managers.

I look forward to having further discussion about that as the debate continues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Julia Munro: It's my pleasure to have an opportunity to add a couple of comments to the debate this morning on the condominium act.

One of the things I think that the architects of the legislation have to keep in mind is that this is covering all of Ontario. Condominium living is different in different parts of the province. When we, in our Toronto-centric way, look at the area and see 35-, 40-storey buildings, that is kind of the vision you have of a condo, but certainly there are condo options that have been created for people in small-town Ontario where there might be 12 units.

I simply want to emphasize that we don't want those smaller units burdened unnecessarily with a lot of red tape where they feel intimidated by the amount of rules they've got to learn in order to be on the board. You don't want to scare them off with that.

It is the old story: 90% of the people or more who live in a condo have no problems. It is a very small group that creates all the problems. So the legislation must temper itself to be available for people. Where it's a seniors' building, where it's people who don't move and want to have relatively—actually, they came because the snow gets picked up and the grass gets cut. The other condo is that in cottage country. That's another specialized group of condo owners.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I now return to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services for final comment.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the members from Nepean—Carleton, London—Fanshawe, Beaches—East York and York—Simcoe for their very constructive comments on the remarks that I made earlier.

I want to let the member from Beaches—East York know that the member from Wellington—Halton Hills has the same fear. His son is attending Carleton University and may not come back. Both his son and the daughter of the member from Beaches—East York are most welcome to come and volunteer in my campaign or in my office. Let them all know this: Everybody is welcome.

I want to pick out the point that both the member from York—Simcoe and the member from London—Fanshawe raised, because I think that it's an important point: That is that these are communities, and people who live in these communities need to be engaged in these communities. I think if anybody will know what community engagement means, it would be members in this House because that is what we do. We encourage other people to do so.

The member from York—Simcoe is absolutely right. A lot of the disputes could be avoided if people were engaged, involved and part of the community. In fact we know that in a majority of the cases people live peacefully; there are no disputes. But those very few, the minority of cases where there are disputes, are nasty in nature. They result in neighbours getting pitted against neighbours. That is the last thing any one of us wants to see within our communities.

That is why I think these rules, especially the establishment of a condominium authority—by having a specialized body that will foster those positive living conditions that will ensure that there is education for condominium owners, that there is education for directors, that there is a more effective, low-cost, mediation-based dispute resolution mechanism.

All these steps, hopefully, will result in better living for condominium owners who have invested, again, a lot of money to live in a safe, secure and peaceful community. I think, collaboratively, as we look toward improving this bill at committee and passing this bill, it will result in better communities across the province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: Thank you for the opportunity to speak on Bill 106, the Protecting Condominium Owners Act. Now, I know that's not a huge, huge issue in Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, but, as the member from York—Simcoe has said, we are getting more condos that are built. They're not the large storeys, but there are condos being built in so-called cottage country, or in Lindsay, for example, my largest town—in Bobcaygeon, Fenelon Falls. So they are out there.

As many of the members in the Legislature have noted today, 1.3 million Ontarians live in some 700,000 condo units. More than 50% of the new homes being built in Ontario are condominiums. That is just the sign of the times and the way the trend is going. I know that in the greater Toronto area, the population is expected to increase from the current approximate number of 6.4 million to 8.9 million by 2036. I know back in August 2014, Toronto city council approved 755 storeys of new development, which is just astounding. The Globe and Mail reported that in less than three days approximately \$21 billion in new development was approved during those last few meetings.

I know that as many of us walk back to our places in Toronto when we're here at the Legislature—our hotels—it seems every corner has a new building being erected for condominiums. All this vertical growth and densification has led scholars and planning experts to coin this urban growth as the “Manhattanization” of Toronto, especially in the south core. It is interesting how these sayings come up as things occur.

Early last year, Emporis, a construction data firm, found that Toronto had more high-rise buildings under construction than any other city in North America. It's quite incredible when you see that statement, but for us, who are down here a little more often, we see it firsthand. Since I was first elected in 2003, the number of condos that I've seen rising out of the ground is, as I've said, breathtaking, but it's not just the corners; it is every parking lot niche that is being snapped up in building these large, glass towers.

What does this all mean to Toronto's and to Ontario's residents in general, even in small-town Ontario? We'll continue to see that trend away from urban sprawl to one that capitalizes on the convenience of accessibility and the vertical incline.

I know that it's been mentioned by Rosario Marchese, the king of the condos—this topic has been brought up for years, since I've been in this Legislature—that the legislation is outdated, going back to 1998 when it was last updated.

As Progressive Conservatives, we certainly believe that home ownership is one of the best investments that a family can make. All residents, ranging from students—I was listening to the debate from the Ottawa university site, the Carleton University site. The kids are down in these urban cities, so some of the mums and dads want to make an investment, if their children are going to be there for several years taking university; it's certainly an investment to be made by them. We need, as government, to ensure that there's some protection for them in making that substantial financial commitment.

After going through a three-stage public engagement process that started three years ago—the most recent one, I'll just add to that—I'm glad the government has provided a bill that is providing some consumer and financial protection measures better than what was there before. But there are always some legitimate concerns. I know it's going to committee and there will be certainly amendments made, hopefully to strengthen this as we see fit. I know that there is a part in the first part that designates “a not-for-profit corporation without share capital incorporated under the laws of Ontario as the condominium authority for the purposes of this act...”

After having read the proposed functions of a condominium authority, its mandate is quite broad, ranging from administering dispute resolution, condo owner education and a condo corporation registry. There are two sticking points with that which I'd like to speak about in regard to the condominium authority.

0950

First, this proposed licensing and adjudicative body seems awfully weak in accountability and transparency. As some of my colleagues on this side have brought up, this delegated administrative authority has little reporting mechanisms back to the House, to us.

It states:

“(1) The Auditor General appointed under the Auditor General Act may conduct an audit of the condominium authority, other than an audit required under the Corporations Act.

“(2) If the Auditor General conducts an audit under subsection (1), the condominium authority shall give the Auditor General and employees of the Auditor General access to all records and other information required to conduct the audit.”

I'm concerned that although the Auditor General has oversight, there's no other independent officer. I think that was brought up in something like an over-a-million-dollar situation, where there may need to be more oversight of one's financial accounts. It has been brought up, and it may be brought up, hopefully, in committee again when deputations come before it, that there may have to be some other accountability measures put in place.

The other issue is how the condominium authority intends to be financed:

“The condominium authority may,

“(a) establish forms related to the administration of the delegated provisions;

“(b) in accordance with processes and criteria established by the condominium authority and approved by the minister, set and collect,

“(i) fees, costs or other charges related to the administration of the delegated provisions, and

“(ii) the fees that a party to a proceeding that is the subject of an application to the Condominium Authority Tribunal under part I.2 is required to pay”—a very detailed interpretation here—“if the tribunal has been established under that part; and

“(c) make directives governing the payment of the fees, costs and charges described in clause (b).”

It's worrying that the condo authority, financed by fees charged to condo corporations—the fees will always be passed down to individual owners. It begs the question as to why condo owners are expected to pay for this authority and for property managers' licensing when they are employees of property management firms. We heard today that they're already advertising for these courses to be taken by condo managers and board directors.

Notwithstanding those concerns, the bill is going to strengthen the owners' financial management. I don't believe that it is incumbent upon the residents to foot the bill for this new administration.

The ambiguity in just how much the condo authority will require in financing is also worrisome, and we see that in today's existing condo act.

In Toronto, where the average price per square foot for a condo is approximately \$600, a 500-square-foot condo would go for \$300,000. For newer condos, the average maintenance fees are 50 cents per square foot, totalling \$3,000 per year. For the average new homebuyer, the exorbitant increases in fees can be unsustainable.

When you take into account the development charges, the municipal section 37 payments and section 42 park levy, not to mention the soaring price of property, it's incredibly important that we, as legislators, ensure there is a stable framework that protects homeowners. That's what our whole goal here is in this legislation: more protection for the homeowners, the condo owners. As owners, they're going to have to absorb a lot of costs with this newly delegated authority, so we have to be sure we get it right.

I know the member from Sarnia-Lambton has said in the House that these administrative authorities will require substantial capital to start up, and if disputes are resolved which require a condo corporation to undergo extensive investments, these monthly fees will only increase, adding to the hefty financial obligations for average Ontarians. I certainly respect his advice in the Legislature. He's had a lot of experience in business, so I appreciate the member from Sarnia-Lambton's comments.

I do support the fact that this bill aims to strengthen the financial management of condos, as owners do deserve to know about their property.

With regard to the financial implications of maintaining or renovating the building, it's important for homeowners to have more transparency and predictability on how maintenance funds are spent on the common areas and for upkeep.

As more and more residents choose to live in these vertical neighbourhoods, it is important to ensure that the building managers are held accountable through the creation of a licensing authority. This compulsory licensing system for managers and management firms will solidify a universal set of standards in terms of qualifications to be a licensed manager.

I'm optimistic that the government will diligently review each clause, particularly in committee. Overall, we welcome the new consumer and financial protection measures.

Mr. Speaker, as I'm running out of time, I will end my comments there. Thank you very much for the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm pleased to stand and put in my two minutes' worth of comments on Bill 106.

I listened intently to the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock and her comments. As she said, there are some financial and consumer protections in this bill, but as she put forward many questions, we also have some questions and concerns. Many of these issues can come up in committee when we're looking at amendments and involving more people in the consultation process through that. That's a good thing we'll look forward to.

As we've heard today, it's been about an eight-year journey to get to this point and there have been so many steps along this path and so much hard work from this side and my—actually, he was not my colleague. I unfortunately wasn't here in the Legislature when the esteemed former member from Trinity-Spadina was here, but I'm pleased to still appreciate his wisdom from my colleagues here in the Legislature. I'm sorry that I missed out on that.

A lot of work has been done on this and we see some of it reflected in this bill, but there is still a ways to go. The member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock spoke in depth about financing, fees and the various pieces that can make it unsustainable for condo owners and that we must ensure a stable framework to protect those condo owners. As she said, we need to get it right.

As I mentioned earlier, having the opportunity in committee to hear more from those condo owners should really be the priority. Their protection needs to be the priority.

As we've heard today, we see no meaningful Tarion reform, and that's a missed opportunity. I'm sure that my colleague from Bramalea-Gore-Malton is ready to make

comments on this, and I know that he has worked extensively on Tarion reform.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: It's great to have an opportunity as a northern member, the MPP for Thunder Bay-Superior North, to comment on this legislation as well, which I think is very much needed and, I think, generally speaking, being positively received. Obviously, it's a very good debate in the Legislature today, as it has been in the past.

I can tell you that in Thunder Bay we do not have the concentration of condominiums, perhaps, that there obviously are in other parts of province, but it is indeed a number that is increasing—buildings that are going up that are being welcomed by a number of people. I think that's why this legislation is actually so needed.

May I say that I've had condominium owners and managers of buildings contact me over the years to try and make sure that they have a role to play in this as well.

I think the key aspects of this legislation are really, really important: certainly increasing protection for condo owners purchasing a condo; and requiring condo managers to be licensed, I think, we agree is a good idea. I think the establishment of the cost-effective dispute resolution system—again, people agree upon how important that is. Instead of spending thousands of dollars and many months in a legal battle, I think all condo owners would welcome having access to a dispute resolution process that can solve those issues, hopefully in a fraction of the time and at a fraction of the price.

I know that there are, over the course of a year, more than a thousand complaints and inquiries related to condo issues. We are dealing with that. This is good legislation.

As the members have referenced, there will be an opportunity in committee to have further discussions about it. But certainly I'm very pleased that this legislation has been brought forward and I strongly support it.

1000

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to rise today and reply to the member from Kawartha-Haliburton-Brock—anyway, more or less like that. It's down in eastern Ontario.

I would like to make a few comments on that. Some of the research I was able to do shows that over 1.3 million Ontarians actually live in condos. I think a lot of them are on the streets we walk back and forth on to work here every day.

It was funny about the debate today because last night, when I was going home, I was walking up Wellesley Street and I stopped to take a look for a couple of minutes at a couple of condominiums that are just rising. It's amazing how they go up every day. When you're here, you don't really realize it because every day, they go up a little higher and they pour some more cement and somebody has got a flag up on one.

My understanding is that there are over 700,000 condos in Ontario—that's up from 270,000 in the early 2000s—and there are over 50-some thousand under construction at this moment. It is not just Toronto; obviously, a number of us live in those here. But back in my own riding—I did some research on that—we have over 3,000 condos in Sarnia-Lambton. Most of those in the city are in Point Edward or along the river in Corunna. People can take advantage of the beautiful St. Clair River at Bluewater Country, or Lake Huron, beautiful Lake Huron.

A number of people in my riding have the opportunity to take advantage of that. A lot of people have moved there, relocated from the GTA and sold homes here for substantially increased prices from what they probably purchased them for a number of years ago; they've chosen to relocate to southwest Ontario. We continue to encourage that, for people to come to southwestern Ontario, especially the Sarnia-Lambton area.

I'll look forward to the rest of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions or comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: This bill is about protecting condominium owners, and it's very important. We've heard from the member that there are 1.3 million people who are living in condos. That equals the population of the entire province of Saskatchewan. That many people are living in condos. The fact that many of them have received little to no protection over these years is simply unacceptable.

What this bill purports to do is something important. It's going to provide some serious protection, some improvement in the existing laws. But there is a certain gap that's left by this bill. While we're seeing an improvement in terms of having a dispute resolution mechanism—that's good, but it doesn't provide for a mechanism to address other disputes beyond just the condominium board, for example with the developer, with the builder, which is probably one of the biggest and the most disputed areas: disputes between the actual builder or the owner of the condominium and the resident. So that area has been left unaddressed by this bill.

In addition, one of the biggest areas of concern for condominium owners—we have to keep in mind that purchasing a home is probably the biggest investment of your life, and that investment is supposed to be protected. There is a home warranty system that protects that investment. But in this province, there have been countless examples of this home warranty system, Tarion, not working for the people. In fact, there is a lot of evidence that suggests that Tarion is actually working against the people, the residents, whom it is supposed to protect.

This bill simply does not address this issue whatsoever, whether it's the fact that Tarion is comprised almost entirely of people who are working for the industry that is supposed to be regulated—they are people who are part of the building associations. How can they provide oversight and protection for the consumer when they are working with the industry that is supposed to be regulated?

There are a lot of problems with Tarion and this bill does not address that. Beyond that, I agree that this bill does move us forward and provides more protection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock for final comments.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for making sure Haliburton got in there, too.

Thank you for the comments made by the Minister of Northern Development and Mines; the members from Oshawa, Sarnia-Lambton—that fine gentleman—and Bramalea-Gore-Malton, the deputy leader of the NDP.

We've all had quite a good discussion this morning. Sometimes that doesn't happen in the Legislature, but I'm pleased that has happened and I'm pleased that the rural members have certainly said their piece also about the condos that are coming to our areas. I will do an advertisement of course, that there are lovely condos as well as waterfront properties and towns to live in in our areas.

We brought up the statistics several times. Certainly the urbanization, the vertical increase, the intensification is occurring mainly in our cities. The numbers of people who are buying—that is going to be their home, condos. That's certainly a shift from other years.

It is said that for many years an update to the Condominium Act needed to occur. We do believe that this certainly gives some greater protection to the condo owners and to the consumers with new ways for dispute resolutions. I know that the NDP has certainly brought up Tarion a lot this morning. I appreciate the fact that maybe we should be looking on the bigger scale with some changes that may need to occur with Tarion, for better consumer protection. But for right now this condo act, Bill 106, is certainly a step in the right direction. We will be looking forward to committee and to making any amendments that we can to strengthen that bill.

I thank you for that opportunity this morning to have time to speak to this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate.

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's always a privilege and honour to stand here in my place on behalf of the good people of Algoma-Manitoulin.

This morning, with all due respect, Mr. Speaker, and a little bit of leniency from you, I want to bring the passion and the fire of one individual who was here at one time and who is very responsible for why we're having this discussion here today, one member, Rosario Marchese:

"We're having this discussion today. Through you, Mr. Speaker, through your eyes, we are doing this today. I say to you all, God bless. God bless. It is wonderful to say, Mr. Speaker, that we are having this discussion this morning, but I ask the government, in their wise eyes, the content of this bill—why are we having this discussion? Why are we missing so many things that could help so many people? Why is this government so unwilling to help those who need help?"—

Interjection: The most.

Mr. Michael Mantha: —“those who need it the most?”

“I say, of course, through you, Mr. Speaker: I challenge this government so that when we get to committee, you listen, you open your eyes, and you bring the changes that are needed to help those that need help most.”

I did that with all due respect and all kindness to my friend Rosie. He was a man that was very passionate about this cause.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Was that an Italian accent?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Well, to answer the question, no, that was a Frenchman trying to be Rosie, and it's impossible. You know, I'm a big-statured man and Rosie was, let's say, not as voluptuous as I am, but he carried his passion and the views and the opinions of so many in his riding. He fought for this issue for eight years. I think actually it was longer than eight years that he was fighting for this issue on behalf of his constituents, and it's here. We're talking about it today.

To my friend Rosie: I miss you. But we're finally having this debate and these discussions. It is not what you have been looking for for a very long time, but it's a step forward. To you, my friend, I take off my hat because you're to be truly credited for this.

As many of our colleagues, we've been flagging this issue for a very long time. These are several important aspects of the bill, some of them that are long overdue.

1010

The bill will license condo managers, improve governance and oversight of condo boards, and provide an inexpensive way for owners and boards to resolve some disputes without going to court. For many, going to court is not an opportunity or a factual way of resolving the issues. The battles that you go through, which have been highlighted for a very long time, prove to be very difficult for many when they go to the courts.

While my caucus and I support this bill, I would like to see it go to committee and ensure the appropriate amendments are made. I've got to say, it's worrisome that it took so long for this bill to get to this point, but it finally is here, and on behalf of my friend Rosario, I do say God bless. Finally, some legislation that will help to protect condo buyers rather than just the wealthy developers has been long overdue.

Myself being from the North, I drive to Toronto and I see growth, vertical growth, whereas in my riding of Algoma-Manitoulin, we see some growth in certain communities, but it's nowhere near what is happening down in this area. The skyline has changed just around my condo on St. Joseph Street, just between Yonge and Bloor. Just in the six years that I've been coming here, I've seen eight condos pop up like a shrub from northern Ontario. It's just unbelievable the amount of growth that has been there.

It begs to ask the question—myself, I just purchased a home last year with my wife up in Elliot Lake, and I know what I bought. I bought a home that was warm. I bought a home that I knew I had to go in and do some

renovations into it. But some of these individuals that are going into these condos don't have that same luxury of knowing. They are presented with a plan, they are presented with photos, they are presented with ideas and they're presented with a dream, the dream being their dream home where they're going to raise their family, where they're going to raise their kids and where they're going to make a living. Once they get to their home, their dreams are shattered, and those individuals struggle to fight the process and fight the developers in order to get what was rightfully promised to them, what they were rightfully told they paid for. Their dream was taken away from them.

It's taken a long time to get to this process. It took many things to get to this. Again, I'll keep mentioning his name: Rosie Marchese worked extremely hard on this. As he would say, “Is it going to take pieces of building, glass falling off of buildings to get something done?” Wait a second; that happened. Is that why we're finally having this discussion here today? Is that why we're starting to challenge ourselves and see and listen and heed the warning signs that are there, that people need a process in order to have their issues heard? I say yes, and I say thank you, Rosie.

In my area of Elliot Lake, there are retirement homes; there are condos that are there. Seniors are getting to their golden years and they just want to be able to move into a location and be taken care of. They want to make sure that the grass is going to be cut, their halls are going to be clean, their security is going to be there, the building is going to be well ventilated and heated, and the snow is going to be removed. Those are the things that they're looking for in their golden years. They want to make sure that their needs are being cared for. When those aren't being done, there needs to be a proper process for them to fight it.

On a fixed income, it's not always that luxurious, that you can actually go through the process of fighting this. It's very costly for them on a fixed pension. Someone on CPP, old age security or guaranteed income supplement: They have a fixed income. They know exactly how much they're going to spend on their bread, on heat and on hydro, how much they're going to pay for their medication, their transit—if they're lucky enough to have transit service in their community. If they need to get to their doctor's, if they need to get to either Sudbury or to the Soo to visit that specialist, they don't have time to waste money on fights with the developers. They don't have that luxury. We really need to look at, through the discussions we're going to have at committee, how we are going to help them make that process that much easier, so that they can have that opportunity to have their issues heard.

I heard that these services will be available to people across the province not only in English, but also in French. We are an official province here, Mr. Speaker. There's probably about 35% of my riding that is francophone. Est-ce qu'ils vont avoir la chance d'avoir des disputes—un processus pour qu'ils puissent apporter

leurs idées, leurs « concerns » et leurs rêves, pour qu'ils puissent être adressés? Is that going to happen in this process? Are we going to make sure that this process is going to be available to them as well?

Unfortunately, my time is already up. There are a few other things that we'd like to make sure are within the contents of this bill. We need to make sure that when we do get to the committee stages, those issues are addressed in here for the consumers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'd like to thank the member for Algoma-Manitoulin and for his respectful impersonation of the former MPP from Trinity-Spadina, Rosario Marchese. Molto bene.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): It is now 10:15, and this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1016 until 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'd like to welcome a few visitors this morning. My friend Terry Yaldo, from Midway Convenience in my riding, is here in the members' gallery. He's joined by Jeff Poulin, the senior manager of affiliates for Mac's Milk.

This is the Ontario Convenience Store Day at Queen's Park, and we are all invited to a reception this evening in the dining lounge.

My friend the mayor of Leamington is here as well. John Paterson is in the House today. Speaker, you may remember that his father, Don, was a Liberal MPP from 1963 to 1975.

Welcome to Queen's Park and good luck with your meetings today.

Hon. Reza Moridi: Mr. Speaker, today is a very special day for Ontario. I'm proud to stand in the House to announce that Arthur B. McDonald, professor emeritus at Queen's University, has won the Nobel Prize in physics for his discovery that neutrinos change identities. I am so pleased that the Ministry of Research and Innovation was able to provide funding to support Mr. McDonald's research at SNOLAB, an underground science laboratory near Sudbury. I've also had the privilege of visiting the SNOLAB to see first-hand the great work happening there.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Introductions only, please.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm very pleased, on behalf of the PC caucus, to welcome to the chamber members of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative, in particular chair Mitch Twolan.

Hon. Bill Mauro: I had a meeting this morning, with members of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative, many of whom are here today in the gallery. I'd like to introduce executive director David Ullrich from the cities initiative; Mayor Keith Hobbs, city of Thunder Bay; Mayor Sandra Cooper from Collingwood; Mayor Scott Warnock from Tay township; Mayor Mitch

Twolan from Huron-Kinloss; Mayor Ziggy Polkowski from Neebing in my community of Thunder Bay-Atikokan; Mayor George Cornell from Tiny; and Mayor Nelson Santos from Kingsville, representing Essex county.

As well, I'd like to introduce Peggy Brekveld from Thunder Bay, the vice-president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture.

I also welcome, from my ministry, many MNR regional staff who are here today for training in Toronto.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to welcome the board of directors of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture here today. They're having lots of meetings. I'd like to welcome my regional director, Mark Kunkel, and the vice-president, Peggy Brekveld. Please join them at their reception this evening.

Hon. Michael Chan: Today, I would like to welcome a friend from out of province, Ross Risvold. He's the former mayor of Hinton, Alberta. Welcome, Ross, over there.

Also, I have a long-time friend, for over 40 years, from British Columbia. His name is Rick Hui; he's also in the members' gallery.

Speaker, today, I have to exercise special attention in the House because my wife, Elaine Chan, is also in the members' gallery. Thank you.

Mr. Steve Clark: I see her hiding in the gallery there. I would just like to welcome my OFA director, Eleanor Renaud, to Queen's Park. Welcome, Ellie; glad to have you here.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'd like to welcome some friends from my riding of Essex: Mayor Nelson Santos and Deputy Mayor Gord Queen of the beautiful, wonderful community of Kingsville. They're here as a part of the Great Lakes mayors' initiative, and I wish them well on their meetings today and look forward to meeting with them later on this afternoon.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: We're going to be joined very shortly by the grade 10 civics class from St. Augustine Catholic High School in the great riding of Oak Ridges-Markham.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure to introduce the mayor of Leamington, from the great riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex: Mayor John Paterson, whose father was a former MPP in this Legislature back during the Bill Davis era.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Some other mayors are with us today: Randy Hope, the mayor of Chatham-Kent, and Mike Bradley, the mayor of Sarnia. We also have Regional Chair Roger Anderson from Durham region and Councillor Mike Layton from the city of Toronto.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Mr. Speaker, join me in congratulating page Gabriel LiVolsi, who is page captain today and from my riding of Davenport. I would also like to welcome his parents, Lee and Roberto, who are joining us here today in the members' gallery. Welcome.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'd also like to welcome today the warden of Huron county and mayor of Morris-

Turnberry, Paul Gowing, as well as the mayor from Saugeen Shores, Mike Smith.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am also pleased to welcome from Durham region our regional chair, Roger Anderson, and the mayor of Oshawa, John Henry, to the Legislature today.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Please join me in welcoming Dave Bryans, CEO of the Ontario Convenience Stores Association, and Noah Aychental, vice-president of Gateway Newstands and chair of the board of the Ontario Convenience Stores Association.

OCSA is meeting with many MPPs today as part of their Queen's Park day. I would also like to invite all MPPs and staff to the OCSA Queen's Park day reception in the legislative dining room tonight from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. I hear the snacks are excellent.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'd like to welcome Debra Pretty-Straathof, who is here today with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and I invite everyone to their reception as well this evening.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to welcome some visitors from Scarborough—Agincourt, from Agincourt community social services. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to welcome Don McCabe, president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and also a resident of Sarnia—Lambton.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like to welcome the mayor from St Catharines, Mr. Walter Sendzik. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Granville Anderson: I would like to welcome the parents of page captain Nuh Ali—mother, Saba Syed, and father, Fahim Ali—to Queen's Park. Welcome.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I would like to welcome Brent Royce, who is here with the OFA today, and he's from my riding of Perth—Wellington.

Mr. Arthur Potts: It's my pleasure to introduce Don McCabe as well, president of the OFA, on behalf of the government of Ontario, and members and directors Mark Kunkel, Mark Reusser and Eleanor Renaud.

Of course, we've heard about the reception. It's also co-sponsored by Spirits Canada, so I'm guessing we'll probably meet up with our friend Jan Westcott tonight.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before I do my introduction, I just wanted to offer a reminder. This time has been set aside for introductions, but we get more introductions in and we don't go beyond the time that's been allotted if we just don't give speeches at all. There's room for those kinds of comments at a later date. If you're going to introduce somebody to come to a lobby day or whatever, do that quickly, please. Don't talk about how good the treats are. Just simply do the introductions, and all of us would benefit from it.

With us in the gallery is a former member from Chatham—Kent in the 35th Parliament, Mr. Randy Hope, presently mayor.

WEARING OF PINS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order, the member from Durham.

Mr. Granville Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent that our members be permitted to wear commemorative pins in recognition of Child Abuse Prevention Month.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Durham is seeking unanimous consent to wear the pins to acknowledge Child Abuse Prevention Month. Do we agree? Agreed.

1040

One last comment. I suspect, when we do these unanimous consents, that all sides are provided with the pins to be made available through the House leaders, just as a reminder to everybody.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Or the whip.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Or the whips. The agreement comes from the House leaders on the unanimous consent. The whips—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just—please.

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. Newfoundland and Labrador pay their hydro CEO just over \$500,000 a year. In New Brunswick, the head of the power corporation is paid just shy of \$425,000 a year. In Nova Scotia, Emera and Nova Scotia Power, which both happen to be publicly traded companies, pay their CEOs a combined total compensation of \$1.8 million. That's four more provincial energy CEOs making less combined than the Hydro One CEO in Ontario. Once again, Mr. Speaker, it's no surprise that these provinces pay lower industrial hydro rates than Ontario.

Businesses across Ontario are leaving. They're turning their lights off. They're shutting their doors because of Ontario's soaring hydro rates. How does the Premier justify these gold-plated paycheques for Hydro One executives?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, let's just do a reality check on some of the things that the Leader of the Opposition said.

In terms of the jobs that we have created, that have been created in Ontario since the recession, over 500,000. So the notion that somehow Ontario is not growing, that our economy is not on track just is not accurate. We're the number one jurisdiction for foreign direct investment two years in a row.

The fact is that, of course, as other jurisdictions in North America and around the world are in a fragile economic state—we understand that. But in Ontario, with the investments that we have made, the investments in infrastructure, in people's talent and skills, the fact that foreign direct investment is coming to Ontario, we are on track.

The fact is that the Leader of the Opposition doesn't support those investments, doesn't support investments in infrastructure and in transit and transportation. We know that they're critical for our prosperity.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, maybe the Premier misheard my question. My question is about generous executive compensation.

I'll be very specific: Hydro-Québec is twice as large as Hydro One in terms of revenue. Hydro-Québec does twice as much as Hydro One since it's responsible for generation, transmission and distribution. Hydro-Québec has four times more employees than Hydro One. Yet the head of Hydro-Québec is paid one eighth of the \$4 million the Premier is handing out to the new Hydro One CEO. He is responsible for half the size of the organization that Quebec operates, but in Ontario, energy bills are higher than our neighbour to the east.

How can the Premier justify paying her new Hydro One CEO eight times more than what they're paying in Quebec? It doesn't make sense.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: There's your reality check, Premier.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to give the member a reality check. Come to order, member from Renfrew.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I understand that the Leader of the Opposition is asking a very specific question about the executives at Hydro One. The Leader of the Opposition knows that Hydro One, in its new incarnation, will be regulated by the Ontario Business Corporations Act, the Ontario Securities Act and the Ontario Energy Board, and that they will have to file information with the Ontario Securities Commission and disclose the compensation of their top executives. That is the reality. It will be a different company than the company it is now. It will be a better company than the company it is now.

But underlying the question is the reality that the Leader of the Opposition doesn't support, for some reason, given that he in the past has supported a move like this, the broadening of ownership of Hydro One in order to invest in transportation infrastructure. That is the reality. We do believe that those investments are critical, Mr. Speaker, and we are going to make those investments.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again for the Premier: It's clear the Premier doesn't seem to mind these ridiculous executive compensation paycheques that she's cutting, how they're going to hurt Ontario families and how hydro rates are going up because of her decisions.

There are six other provinces in Canada where the primary electrical company is a crown corporation.

Those six provinces are able to pay their CEOs—combined—less than what you're paying here in Ontario. There is no reason for the Premier to be paying this much money for her CEO when every other province in Canada can rein in their executive compensation.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier is, why does she think these salaries are acceptable?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, there are mayors sitting in the gallery today and many of those mayors have had meetings with me and with my colleagues. The number one issue they raise with us is investment in infrastructure. There are roads and bridges and transit projects around this province—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I understand that the opposition doesn't want to hear this, Mr. Speaker. I understand they want to shout down anything that would indicate that they don't understand that the investments that we need to make right now are for the future productivity and competitiveness of this province. We're going to make those investments.

Yes, Hydro One is going to be a different company, but the Leader of the Opposition knows full well that the way rates are set now by the Ontario Energy Board is the way rates will be set going forward. That will not change, Mr. Speaker.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Since I can't get an answer on the issue of executive compensation, I'm going to try health care.

The government's cuts to health care are hurting patient care in Ontario. I'm going to give an example to the House today. We know of a doctor who is on call for the Telephone Health Advisory Service. He took a call from an ill patient. It was a Sunday afternoon and the doctor interrupted his family time to take this telephone health advisory call. This particular call, like so many others, prevented a patient from having to go to the emergency room.

Mr. Speaker, is the Premier prepared to tell the people of Ontario that these cuts to health care, like the one we're talking about here today, are going to cause people to wait longer and longer in an emergency room when it could have been dealt with otherwise?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: First of all, Mr. Speaker, health care costs are increasing and our investments in health care are increasing, so we're not cutting health care. The fact is that since 2003, funding for hospitals alone has risen from \$11.3 billion—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

It's very difficult when somebody from the government side is pointing and talking and eliciting a response. Just relax.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You obviously haven't heard me.

Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Hospital funding alone, Mr. Speaker, has risen from \$11.3 billion to \$17.3 billion. That's a 53% increase since 2003. Funding for community support services increased to almost \$514 million this year. That's an increase of \$41.9 million over last year, Mr. Speaker.

There were 135,280 nurses employed in nursing in 2014, up 2.7% from 2013 and up 21.6% from 2002. So the fact is, Mr. Speaker, health care investments are going up.

The Leader of the Opposition stood with Stephen Harper when he unilaterally slashed the Canada Health Transfer, Mr. Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Order.

Supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again for the Premier: No one believes for a second that this government isn't cutting health care. We all know you've cut it by \$54 million.

The government is trying to portray—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Order.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Now the government is trying to portray Ontario doctors as villains, and that's simply not the case.

A doctor in Thunder Bay shared a story with me about the latest round of Liberal cuts and how it's affecting his health clinics. He's going to have to let two staff members go and close his two clinics. That's because he's no longer able to afford the costs associated with running those clinics. When he closes those clinics in Thunder Bay, 4,000 more people in Thunder Bay will be without a family doctor.

1050

There are 800,000 people in Ontario without a family doctor. How can this Premier justify diminishing health care in Thunder Bay?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: If the Leader of the Opposition is standing up to stand in opposition to the changes that we are making in terms of doctors' pay because we couldn't come to an agreement with the OMA, if that's what he's saying, then I would say to him that we value our doctors. The doctors in Ontario are paid, on average, more than any other doctors in the country, so they are very well paid, as they should be. That is a very good thing.

If the Leader of the Opposition is saying we shouldn't transform the health care system—because we are making changes. We are moving services from hospitals into the community because that is what our aging demographic actually requires. People want to be at home. We're not there yet; it's not done. There is more that has to be done, but we are in the process of transforming the

system. If he's standing up and saying we shouldn't do that, then he's out of touch with the needs of the people in our communities.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again for the Premier: If transforming the health care system is code for this government ripping \$800 million away from doctors for patient care, then I don't support this transformation.

Let me give you an example of what their transformation means: In 2005, an ophthalmologist from Cornwall was able to reduce cataract surgery wait time to just one month. In the past year, under the Liberal government cuts, she has seen her wait time increase to four months—

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Where were you when the feds cut transfer payments?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Mr. Patrick Brown:—and another six months for surgery. Now the Liberal government has put a cap on the number of surgeries she can perform. She is only able to operate twice a month. These cataract surgeries mean all the difference in the world to those who need it.

How much more evidence does the Premier need until she can appreciate she's cutting health care in Ontario and it's hurting patients?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I'm a little confused, because I'm absolutely certain that the member opposite, the Leader of the Opposition, is talking about the federal government and not the provincial government, because it's estimated—when he talks about health care cuts, in the next 10 years we're going to be receiving, as a province, \$8 billion less as a result of the changes that that member opposite supported. When he talks about cuts to health care, he's talking about changes in the federal transfer that are resulting in a \$335-million cut to health care in this province because of a decision of the government that he was part of. When he talks about cuts—he has a lot of experience with health care cuts.

Our budget is increasing. Our budget for doctors is increasing by 1.25% this year. Next year, it continues to go up, as does our health care budget. It goes up year after year after year as we make important investments.

Our doctors are the best paid in this country. I'm proud of that. I'm a member of that profession. But we need to pay attention to other health care workers, our PSWs, our nurses and nurse practitioners, as we build the best health care system in the world—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

This is my opportunity to remind people that you speak to the Chair and in the third person.

New question.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier is selling off Hydro One for a one-time cash grab of \$4 billion she says will go into her 10-year infrastructure fund. That works out to \$400 million per year over 10 years. But what she won't tell us is that by restoring the corporate tax rate by just 1%, we would earn more than \$4 billion over the next 10 years, and we would retain public ownership of Hydro One, which would continue to provide us significant revenues in each one of those years.

So why is this Premier plowing ahead with the short-sighted privatization of Hydro One when she could have chosen a reliable, long-term plan for the future of Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Whenever there is an issue about investment, the leader of the third party turns to a corporate tax increase. She has spent that \$4 billion 50 times.

The fact is that we have made a prudent—

Interjection.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We have increased taxes. The leader of the third party knows we have increased taxes. In our budget we have increased taxes on the highest income earners in this province. She knows that full well. What she also knows is that we need to make investments in infrastructure.

We were clear with the people of Ontario that we were going to leverage the assets that were built many years ago in order to be able to build the new assets that are needed in this province. That's what we're doing, and we're making those investments across the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Independent experts, from KPMG to the Premier's own transit adviser, Anne Golden, calculate that restoring 1% of the corporate tax rate would raise between \$420 million and \$700 million per year. Other economists put the figure even higher. By dedicating \$400 million to infrastructure, we could make the investments that we need and keep Hydro One in public hands. It's exactly the kind of smart, progressive solution that this Premier rejects.

Why is this Premier selling off Hydro One when she should be asking the biggest corporations to pay just a little bit more for the infrastructure that they need and the infrastructure that we need?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We brought in a budget in 2014 that was a progressive budget, that actually did increase taxes. It reinvested in people like personal support workers. It brought in a plan to index the minimum wage and increase the minimum wage. We got no support from the NDP on that budget, Mr. Speaker. So in terms of making investments and building this province, I do not take any lessons from the leader of the third party.

The fact is that we have made a decision that we've talked to the people of Ontario about. We've made a decision that investing in the roads and the bridges and the transit and the hospitals and the schools around this province is what is needed at this point. Communities

have said that to us. They need that infrastructure investment, and we are going to work with them to make it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the bottom line is that this Premier had better choices, but she's choosing a short-term scheme, and it is the wrong decision for the people of Ontario.

The Premier's sell-off of Hydro One protects her small group of powerful friends from paying their fair share, but it leaves families and businesses paying the price, not just now but for decades to come. This Premier could be asking the biggest corporations to help tackle congestion and build the infrastructure that we need. Instead, she is giving Ontarians a completely false choice.

Why is this Premier selling off Ontario's most important public asset when she could simply raise corporate taxes by a mere 1% to get all of the money she needs and more?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As we might expect, the leader of the third party is not looking at the whole picture. Part of the plan that we put forward to the people of Ontario was to make sure that we had a competitive business environment, that we worked with business to make sure that we drew investment to the province and that businesses could expand. It's not perfect, but the fact is, we have been the number one jurisdiction for foreign direct investment for two years in a row. That indicates that people and businesses see that Ontario is somewhere they want to invest. They want their businesses to be here. The fact is that that competitiveness is critical to our well-being, and the jobs that we have been able to foster and that businesses have been able to create are because of that competitive business environment. But the leader of the third party never takes that into account.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE AGREEMENT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier.

Yesterday, Stephen Harper concluded the negotiations on the secret Trans-Pacific Partnership. Details of the deal are just emerging, but we know that it will be good for Big Pharma and it will be bad for health care in Ontario. The Council of Canadians warns that the TPP threatens the possibility of creating a national pharmacare program in Canada, and the CEO of the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario said that the TPP will kill pharmacare. Yet, sight unseen, the Premier and her federal leader have endorsed Harper's secret deal. Why is this Premier choosing big American pharmaceutical companies over the health care needs of Ontarians?

1100

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Once again, the leader of the third party oversimplifies a very complex situation. We haven't endorsed anything. What we said was that we must compete globally. To take the position that she and Tom Mulcair have taken, which is, "We wipe our hands of it. We're not going to compete in the global

economy. We're just going to say forget it; we're not going to sign on," is ridiculous in 2015. You absolutely have to work in the global economy.

What we've said is, on the face of it there are opportunities, but we're very concerned about some of the issues that we believe should have been more transparent. I'm not happy with the way Stephen Harper has negotiated this. He hasn't talked with the Premiers—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Hey, that's my Prime Minister.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, member from Nepean—Carleton.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —he hasn't talked with any of the local communities.

We're concerned about supply management, we're concerned about the auto parts sector, but that doesn't mean we're going to put our heads in the sand and pretend we don't live in the world.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Doctors Without Borders issued a statement about the TPP, saying that it "will raise the price of medicines for millions by unnecessarily extending monopolies and further delaying price-lowering generic competition. The big losers in the TPP are patients and treatment providers in developing countries."

We know that this deal sells out the public, consumers and patients not just in Ontario but in countries around the world, and yet this Premier is "excited about the ... TPP" and has endorsed Harper's secret trade deal so that she can remain in step with her federal leader.

Why won't this Premier listen to the people on the front lines and do the right thing for Ontario patients and demand changes to the Trans-Pacific Partnership before Canada signs on?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: So, Mr. Speaker, the leader of the third party just said this is a secret trade deal. I kind of agree with her that it was not transparent. We were not able, as the Premiers of the provinces and the territories, to be able to see the negotiations as they went along. That's why we asked the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs to go to Atlanta to make the case for supply management.

We've been concerned about this deal, but the leader of the third party can't say it's a secret deal and then say she knows exactly what's in it and we shouldn't sign on to it.

We have to know what's there. There is a ratification period. We need to know what the details are. We need to consider those details. To, sight unseen, say we're just not going to take part, we're not going to sign on, is a ridiculous position to take in 2015.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary, please.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Harper government negotiated a secret deal that will make it harder—harder—for Ontario's future health care challenges to be met, and the federal leader that the Premier has been campaigning for is signing on to that deal.

According to the Ontario Health Coalition, the TPP will limit the government's ability to control drug prices, which could put a national pharmacare plan out of reach for the province of Ontario and the rest of the country.

Again, I'll quote from Doctors Without Borders: "The negative impact of the TPP on public health will be enormous, be felt for years to come...."

Why is this Premier endorsing Stephen Harper's secret plan instead of standing up for pharmacare in Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We need to see the agreement, and we need to be able to analyze it, because it has been quite secretive, as the leader of the third party says, which means we don't know all of the details that are in it. We need some time to analyze it.

But here's the thing: I have a huge amount of confidence in businesses in this province and in this country. I believe we can compete globally. As the Premier of the province of Ontario, it is absolutely my responsibility to make sure we can compete globally. That is the future. That's why it's so important that we have foreign direct investment coming to this province. That's why we invest in our people's talent and skills. We're going to compete globally. We're going to look for the opportunities and seize those opportunities. But we need to analyze this deal, which was not transparent enough. We don't know those details and we need to find those out.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is to the Premier. In late February, the Premier held a press conference and said, "On our review of the matter, we don't expect" charges to be laid against Pat Sorbara. Oddly enough, the Premier never came to the defence of one of the Liberals' biggest fundraisers, Gerry Lougheed Jr.

After 10 months of what the OPP called a complex and very uncommon investigation, charges were laid against Mr. Lougheed Jr., but not against the Premier's deputy chief of staff.

What did the Premier know 10 months ago? Did she know that Gerry Lougheed agreed to take the fall for Pat Sorbara?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I'm really puzzled by the nature of the question and the way it's so convoluted, because in it I almost read that the member opposite is doubting the good work of the Ontario Provincial Police in this matter.

As the member opposite cited himself, there has been a 10-month-long investigation in the matter done by one of the most professional police services in this country, the Ontario Provincial Police, and they have made a determination. They have made a determination as to who to charge and who not to charge in this matter.

I don't think we are in any position whatsoever to doubt or question that judgment of the Ontario Provincial Police. I ask the member opposite to respect the process, to respect the investigative work that is being done and to let the courts decide this matter further.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Again to the Premier: The Premier reiterated the fact that she didn't expect charges were going to be laid on Pat Sorbara in this chamber. She never defended Gerry Lougheed that same way. She never said that she didn't expect charges to take place in the Ornge air ambulance scandal. The Premier never said that she didn't expect charges in the gas plant scandal. The only thing she said was that she didn't expect charges were going to be laid against Pat Sorbara.

The Premier has over and over again said that she wouldn't comment on the corruption investigation throughout the last 10 months except to say that Pat Sorbara would not be charged. Despite what everyone, and I mean everyone, heard on those tapes, the Premier must have known something.

Why was the Premier able to claim 10 months ago that there weren't going to be charges laid against Pat Sorbara?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Clearly the member opposite is doing what we call fishing. He is out there trying to find something that he can talk about, because clearly the opposite side has not—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order—on both sides.

Carry on.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I would say to the members opposite, stop fishing and start focusing on real and substantive matters before us in this province, and that is to build the infrastructure, that is to invest in our economy so that we can continue to grow this province, so that we continue to create good-paying jobs, as this government is focused on. Their fishing expedition is not going to go anywhere. What we need to focus on is to let the police do their work, let the court proceedings take their course, while we, as legislators, focus on building Ontario up.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE AGREEMENT

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Premier. In September, Stephen Harper admitted that the auto sector wasn't going to like what was in the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal. But then yesterday, Justin Trudeau said that he would "wait and see" what was in the TPP before weighing in.

Also yesterday—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm sure the member will tie this into a government question.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you, Speaker.

Also yesterday, the Premier herself, referring to the TPP trade pact, said, "It's important that we need to be able to seize this opportunity."

1110

Now that the Premier of Ontario is spending so much of her time as Premier on the campaign trail, talking up the leader of the federal Liberal Party, will she too wait and see what devastating effects this trade deal will have

on the province's automotive and manufacturing sectors before she acts?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Yesterday, I delivered a speech to the Empire Club. I had the opportunity to talk about how important it is for provinces and territories to have a working relationship with the federal government. I did make that speech, Mr. Speaker, and I was asked questions about the TPP in the aftermath of the speech.

What I said was that it is very important that we are competitive on the global scale, that we understand—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Nepean—Carleton, second time.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:—that in order for our economy to thrive here in Ontario, and for the national economy to thrive, we look for those markets and we seize those opportunities. I did say that, and I believe that because I have faith in Ontario, I have faith in Canada and I have faith in our ability to seize those opportunities.

But does that mean that everything about the TPP is as it should be? I don't think so, but we don't have those details and neither does the NDP.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: This morning we learned that Stephen Harper made an election promise of money for the auto industry, anticipating the damage done by this trade agreement. The Auto Workers estimate that the job losses will be roughly around 20,000.

The truth is that the TPP is only the latest in a long list of wrecking balls to hit this province's manufacturing sector. Once a driver of our economy, the people who filled these jobs in communities like London, Essex, Windsor and other locations are now, frankly, struggling to hold on. Speaker, this is all under the Liberal government's watch.

Will the Premier speak out in favour of Ontario jobs, or will she just say whatever is needed to elect her Liberal leader, Justin Trudeau?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, we live in a global economy. What the NDP would like to do is just build walls on our borders and keep out everyone else, but the problem with that is that we're—

Mr. Paul Miller: Everything is owned by international companies. We don't own anything.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We are 13.5 million people. We need to be a centre of innovation in order to be able to compete. We need those markets to sell into and we need connections with markets around the world.

I am very, very concerned about some of the clauses in the TPP. We need to analyze those. There's a ratification period, and we need a sensible conversation with the federal government, whoever is there, about what's good for the people of Ontario.

But I do not believe that we can wash our hands of global participation. I think that would be irresponsible. It would not be in the best interests of industry in this

province or in this country, so we are going to look to seize opportunities.

CHILD CARE

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: My question is for the Minister of Education. As we all know, child care provides a strong foundation for our youngest learners, and our government is committed to strengthening child care in Ontario.

I know how important it is for my constituents to have access to safe and modern child care. When families in my riding meet me in my office, at community events or at their doorstep, they always talk about the safety of their children, especially when they leave them in the care of others.

Mr. Speaker, my question through you to the minister is, can she please tell my constituents how we are ensuring that we are giving their children the best possible start in life?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you to the member for Mississauga—Brampton South, who is a great advocate for schools and child care in her riding.

Since 2003, child care funding in Ontario has increased from \$530 million to over \$1 billion—almost double. The number of licensed child care spaces has also grown over the same time, to nearly 351,000, which is an increase of 87%. In the past year alone, we've seen more than a 10% increase in the number of licensed child care spaces. And last year, our government provided an additional \$269 million over three years to support a wage increase of \$1 per hour for eligible child care program staff working in the licensed child care centres and home child—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Thank you, Minister. I know that child care is a priority for my constituents in my riding, and I also know that our government recognizes the importance of investing in our children's future.

I was so pleased to hear, this past Friday, that our government is investing almost \$795,000 in my riding to build 49 new child care spaces. Minister, can you please explain more about this announcement and how it will help our children to transition from child care to full-day kindergarten?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Last spring, I was pleased to announce that our government is investing \$120 million over the next three years to create approximately 4,000 new child care spaces in schools across Ontario.

Last week, I was pleased to announce the first tranche of that funding, which is 13 schools that will be getting a total of 42 new child care rooms, housing almost 800 new spaces. So adding that space in local schools is an important step obviously to getting high-quality child care into more neighbourhoods.

Over the next 10 years, the province actually plans to provide school boards with more than \$11 billion to help build new schools in areas of high growth. But what's

interesting about this particular program that the member talked about is new child care—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question?

HOUSING SERVICES CORP.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Yesterday, I asked the minister about the fact that social housing dollars had been used to pay for a luxury, eight-day South African vacation, and the minister just laughed it off. This was a luxury vacation with a private driver, an apartment on an estate, winery tours, whale-watching, a visit to a nature preserve, a cable car up Table Mountain and more, paid for by using taxpayers' dollars.

Mr. Speaker, we have the expense form right here from the individual who billed it. Now that the minister has had time to look into it, can he tell us if he has asked for the cost of that South African vacation back?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: The 2012 trip was before we enhanced the accountability measures which, when you were in government, you weren't prepared to do.

Mr. Speaker, I sometimes think the honourable member opposite must be misquoting. He is aware that my government took steps to increase the accountability of HSC, steps his government would not take, and yet he says no one has done anything. The member knows that I wrote to the chair of HSC more than a year ago, expressing concerns about some expense policies, yet he says no one has done anything. The member also knows that the board of HSC reviewed its expense policies and brought them into compliance with management board guidelines, and yet he says no one has done anything.

He also knows that HSC participated in a third-party review of its management and policies to ensure effective governance, a review which found the organization today to be well managed—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, the minister has forgotten what year this party became government. This was in 2012.

Most taxpayers in Ontario can't afford luxury trips to South Africa, and certainly the 168,000 families waiting for affordable housing can't. We're talking about thousands of dollars that went to a personal vacation instead of affordable housing; taxpayers' dollars that paid for wine tasting and meals at award-winning restaurants while families on the wait-list struggle to put food on their table. It's a clear misuse of taxpayers' money, and the people waiting for affordable housing want to know what the government is doing about it. Again, I ask, what steps has the minister taken to investigate and get that money back? Or does he think that it's acceptable to use affordable housing dollars for South Africa luxury trips?

1120

Hon. Ted McMeekin: The member knows—just going on with the thrust of my arguments—that HSC has

committed to an action plan to address improvements recommended by the third-party review, improvements which will make the governance—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Oxford, come to order. You asked the question; I'm trying to listen to it.

Mrs. Gila Martow: He's not answering.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Thornhill is not helping. You are also to come to order.

Finish, please.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: He says no one has done anything about it. Can the member explain to this House why he has said that no one has done anything about it, when the facts so clearly point out otherwise? Speaker, I leave that question with the honourable member. What was, was. You didn't put accountability measures in place; we did.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Through the Chair.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: The best political advice I ever got was from the late, great Sterling Hunt—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. First of all, your time is up. Second of all, third person and to the Chair.

New question.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE AGREEMENT

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you, Speaker. My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, after word of the finalized deal emerged, our Minister of Agriculture was very clear about concerns for the TPP's negative implications for Ontario supply-managed farms. In his statement on the government of Ontario website, he was very clear that the TPP could undermine "consumers' desire to buy local, jeopardizes Canada's supply management system, and does not provide Canadian producers reciprocal benefits to export." That's a quote. But in a speech to the Empire Club, the Premier, while discussing the same TPP, stated, "It is important that we take hold of this as an opportunity." She went as far as to criticize the leader of the federal NDP for not supporting the deal sight unseen. So, through you to the Premier, does the Premier agree with the Minister of Agriculture that this opportunity could jeopardize Ontario's supply-managed farms?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, here's the thing: It is a complex deal. The fact is that there are many parts to it. There's the part where we will have opened markets, where we will actually see opportunities, where businesses in this province and in this country will have more opportunity. That's one part of this situation.

The other part is that we have concerns. We do have concerns. Those things are not mutually exclusive. The fact is that we have concerns about the supply-managed sector. We have concerns about auto parts. We have been clear about that. But that does not mean that we wash our hands of an opportunity to expand markets. The fact is

that we live in a global economy, and to oversimplify our position in the world would be irresponsible. We're not going to do that, even if that's the NDP's choice.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again to the Premier: The market access granted to non-Canadian, non-local food would be lost to Ontario farmers forever—farmers that operate at no cost to the taxpayer, until this trade deal was announced. On October 1, the Minister of Agriculture stated, "When you have a really good trade deal in place you really don't need to discuss compensation." Yet we're moving from a system where farmers earned enough from their products to a system where the government will have to cover the shortfall.

Is the Premier willing to risk Ontario's supply-managed farms on a deal whose details no one has really seen, or is she too invested in campaigning for her federal counterpart?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There's an expression about the pot calling the kettle black, Mr. Speaker.

Anyway, the fact is that this is a deal that will have an influence on every province and territory in the country. There hasn't been enough information about it. Stephen Harper has not included Premiers of the provinces and the territories in those discussions. I've called for that. Premiers have called for that at the Council of the Federation. He didn't do that, so we don't have all the information.

I have concerns. I have concerns about the supply-managed sector. I've been a huge supporter of supply management, along with the Premier of Quebec. I've been very, very clear about that.

I have concerns about the auto sector, Mr. Speaker, but the reality is, we don't have all the information. We have to analyze it and we have to recognize that we are part of a global economy. We need those relationships; we need those markets. We need to seize the opportunities, and at the same time make sure that the conditions are ripe for our industry here in Ontario.

SOCIAL SERVICES PROFESSIONALS

Mme Marie-France Lalonde: Ma question est pour la ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires.

Minister, social workers and social service workers perform a vital role serving some of the most vulnerable individuals living in Ontario. Through the work of your ministry, they help serve individuals through the social assistance system, support individuals with developmental disabilities, help women and their children escape violence, and support First Nations and aboriginal communities towards healing and wellness. Through the work of other ministries, the province's social workers and social service workers help protect children and support families.

Beyond these government programs, there is a larger social support network that serves these individuals in need. Frequently, the people behind these efforts are social workers or social service workers.

Minister, you have made it a priority to support social workers and social service workers. Can you please share with this House the details of the professional development fund?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Thank you to the member for Ottawa-Orléans for the question.

Our government recognizes and values the important contributions made by all our front-line workers, including those who are social workers and social service workers, who deliver the supports and services to Ontarians every day.

We are committed to ensuring that they have the support they need to perform their jobs to the highest standard. That is why earlier this year, at the Ontario Association of Social Workers annual general meeting, I announced the launch of a two-year \$1-million professional development fund to help with the costs of professional development activities, completed by members of the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers. By providing financial assistance for professional development opportunities, we are supporting social workers' and social service workers' access to advance their skills, knowledge, practice and service delivery.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Merci, madame la Ministre.

Certainly, from a very personal standpoint, as a former social worker, this news is very exciting. As a professional development fund, it is the first-ever opportunity like this in Ontario's history. It is long overdue and much appreciated, and certainly an opportunity that I wish existed at the time when I was working in this field.

As of this September, social workers and social service workers can access professional development dollars that will pay for approved professional development activities. This investment is going to the professionals who help turn this government's policies and programs into action at the community level, and their work makes a real difference in the lives of thousands of Ontarians every day.

Minister, I understand that individuals can now apply for the fund. Can you share the opportunities that this will provide to interested professionals?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: As the member from Ottawa-Orléans has expressed, we rely on highly trained social workers and social service workers at the front line to strengthen our communities. The professional development fund will help to ensure the college members can access professional development tools that will enhance service delivery to these vulnerable populations. The fund will provide financial assistance to successful applicants of up to \$300 over the next two years, helping them to participate in workshops, courses and conferences that will advance their knowledge and skills, integrate their learning, and help them gain experience working with vulnerable groups.

Our government truly values the extensive knowledge, the professionalism and the personal attention social

work professionals bring to helping families and individuals navigate their way through difficult times. I want to thank social workers and social service workers for their service, and encourage them to access the benefits of further professional development.

POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

The tragic crash that claimed the lives of three children and their grandfather in Vaughan is having a deep impact on the brave men and women who answered the call. Iain Park, deputy chief for York region EMS, said that eight of the 15 paramedics who attended the scene took time off to seek help for post-traumatic stress disorder. In his 25-year career, he has never seen a single incident affect so many staff members. He said, "When we have an incident like this when we have so many ... that are affected, it gives us the opportunity to start talking about it." The opposition wants to talk about extending PTSD coverage for first responders. We must fast-track Bill 2.

1130

The minister is also the House leader and it's his file. Will the minister join the opposition and fast-track the bill and help our heroes with PTSD?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the honourable member for what is a very, very important question that we take very, very seriously in this House. To summarize my response to you, I think we can do better than Bill 2. I think the member has brought forward Bill 2 and has started the conversation going.

As I uncover more and more about this issue in consultation with our front-line workers, paramedics, firefighters, police officers and those who respond to the front lines, I'm convinced that we must do a combination of what's envisioned in Bill 2, with some improvements to it. I'm also convinced that what we need is a very comprehensive prevention program in this province. I'm committing to bring forward a proposal to this House that I think will meet with the intent of what the sincerity behind your question is.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: We need to see legislation. Deputy Chief Park said, "As a profession, paramedics often feel that there's a stigma associated with it, they keep inside."

Part of the reason the stigma exists is that the government has yet to fully acknowledge the impact of post-traumatic stress disorder. It takes a special person to be a first responder. They're human. Our government must send a clear message to our first responders that PTSD is real and it doesn't make you less of a person to admit that you need help.

We're once again calling on the minister and House leader to bring the NDP's bill forward. When can our

first responders, our heroes, expect to see it before the House?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Once again, thank you to the honourable member for the question.

We all know that PTSD is a very serious condition. We're finding out more and more about it as we uncover the effects that it has on our front-line workers. What we have done at the Ministry of Labour is we had a round table a number of years ago. That was people who work on the front lines and who came forward, formed a group and brought us their best advice.

One of the things they told us is, "You need to get everyone together. You need to bring the best advice in." We had General Roméo Dallaire who came and spoke at a summit that was hosted and attended by some members of this House in Toronto not very long ago. As a result of the information we've received to date, we're ready to begin moving on bringing something forward to get introduced to this House and to get it through the committee process.

I think what you're going to see introduced by the Minister of Labour speaks directly to the concerns that you're raising and the respect we owe our front-line workers.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Yesterday, I asked the minister to explain an unbudgeted \$2.6-billion cash payment to Hydro One. The minister called my question a "diatribe." He said the government was simply paying the money to itself, so it was a wash.

The government is not quite paying the money to itself. The government is taking \$2.6 billion out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund and giving this cash to the Ontario Electricity Financial Corp., which can only use it to pay down debt. The \$2.6 billion in cash will be gone; \$2.6 billion in real cash is leaving the treasury to pay for an unbudgeted expense. This cash will no longer be available to pay for health care, education or transit. Instead, the money will go to the OEFC and then to Hydro bondholders.

Speaker, how is this a wash?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We did deal with this in estimates this morning and in question period yesterday. This transaction will have no fiscal impact for Ontario.

We have been clear that the purpose of broadening the ownership of Hydro One is to maximize its value so we can make the largest investment in infrastructure in the province's history, and that's exactly what we're doing.

Hydro One will be paying the government the amount it owes to become a public company to a departure tax, which applies to all LDCs in the province. Hydro One is being treated like any other company in this respect. To ensure the value of Hydro One is maximized, the province will provide Hydro One with a capital contribution that is equal to the same value as the departure tax. In

return, the province will get shares of Hydro One that are of equal value.

Mr. Speaker, I want to be clear that this will have no fiscal impact for Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The government's budget forecasts an \$8.5-billion deficit based on \$131.9 billion in expenses. Now the government says there will be an additional unbudgeted expense. The government will pay Hydro One's \$2.6-billion tax bill in cash. This money will not return to the Consolidated Revenue Fund; it will flow to Hydro bondholders.

The government has refused to give information on this transaction to the Financial Accountability Officer. The Hydro One prospectus says that in return for the cash payment, the government will receive \$2.6 billion in shares of Hydro One, a company the government already owns 100% of.

Does the government plan to pay for its transit investments with accounting tricks?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: As a 100%-owned crown corporation, Hydro One is currently not required to pay federal or provincial income tax. Instead, it makes payments in lieu of tax, or PIL, to the Ontario Electricity Financial Corp.

When the company goes public and becomes broadly held, the market value is compared to the tax value of the company to determine the departure tax payable when leaving the PIL system. In Hydro One's case, the company is paying \$2.6 billion in departure tax as part of the transition to a broadly held, publicly traded company. Hydro One is being treated like any other company in this respect: The company is paying the departure tax.

Before the IPO is completed, the province, as shareholder, will make a capital contribution into Hydro One and receive new common shares of Hydro One Ltd. for a total of \$2.6 billion. This will provide Hydro One funds that it will use to pay the departure tax. There's no fiscal impact in any way, shape or form.

COMMUNITY POLICING

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Minister, we all know that Ontario is one of the safest places in Canada to live, work and raise a family. In fact, my riding of Barrie has been rated one of the safest cities in all of Canada for two years in a row. Thank you to Police Chief Kimberley Greenwood and Mayor Lehman.

Since 2003, Ontario's crime rate has dropped by 34% and Ontario's violent crime rate dropped by 27%. These are statistics of which we can all be proud. But policing is becoming increasingly more challenging in the 21st century. We are seeing a growing number of interactions with vulnerable people, such as those who suffer from mental health and addiction.

Mr. Speaker, could you please ask the minister what he is doing to modernize policing in the 21st century?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the member from Barrie for the thoughtful question.

The Police Services Act was written in 1990 and has basically remained unchanged over the past 25 years. We can all think of examples of just how much the world has changed in that time, and that is why it is so important that we modernize how policing is done in our province. That is why we plan to open up the Police Services Act and conduct a thorough review.

We have worked with our municipal and policing partners through the Future of Policing Advisory Committee to develop our Strategy for a Safer Ontario. Our new strategy is our government's blueprint of what effective, sustainable and community-based policing will look like in Ontario.

It is now time to take the next step. We want to take the strategy out of the boardroom and into the community centres and neighbourhoods to consult directly with Ontarians. Starting this fall, our government will be hosting consultations across the province to discuss the key pillars of our new strategy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Thank you to the minister for that answer. I'm glad to hear that you have been working hard to bring forward a new model of policing for the 21st century. It is vital that we look to tackle more complex community safety issues and we develop better, more efficient solutions to these problems. I know that as we work to build an even safer community in my riding of Barrie, these solutions will have an important impact.

As the minister begins to consult on this new strategy, I think it is important that communities across our province understand how they will be engaged. After all, the issues that they face are both broad and varied and they must understand how they can participate in making this an even safer province.

Speaker, through you, can the minister please explain what he will do to engage communities in this new strategy?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: It is our strong belief that as we work to build even safer communities, we must engage our communities themselves in that process.

The cornerstone of our new strategy will be community safety and well-being plans, which will be in every part of the province. These plans will help to reduce the demand for a reactive, resource-intensive emergency response. They will achieve this by developing a collaborative and proactive approach to community safety, where community partners share information and work together with police on early intervention opportunities.

A number of these important projects are already in place. For example, Hamilton's partnerships with mental health nurses and coordination with local hospitals are improving outcomes for citizens and reducing the amount of time officers spend in waiting rooms.

These are the kinds of meaningful collaborations that we want to encourage with communities through our community safety and well-being plans as we work to make Ontario an even safer place in the 21st century.

ROAD MAINTENANCE

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Minister of Transportation.

Yesterday we learned that the fallout from last November's icy QEW commuter chaos has meant a \$500,000 fine for a government road maintenance contractor. Again, instead of government insuring motorists' safety ahead of winter snowfall like we get in Canada here, we see the same knee-jerk "fine and forget about it" routine after the damage is done. It's the same lacklustre approach that this government has taken since watering down standards and oversight in 2009 with compromised contracts, putting motorists' lives at risk to save a few bucks. Every winter we see the same story play out: treacherous conditions, traffic tie-ups, collisions and sadly, even deaths.

It's October. Will the minister commit to Ontario motorists that their safety will not be risked this winter by the cut-rate winter road maintenance contracts they introduced in 2009?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to begin by thanking the member for that question.

As I have said many times in this House, making sure that Ontario's roads and highways are maintained—in all seasons, of course, including winter—in a proper way so that our motorists and the travelling public have the confidence to drive on our roads and highways is one of my top priorities. It's worth noting that for the last 13 years, this province has ranked first or second across North America for having the safest highways and roads, specifically with respect to winter maintenance.

I'm delighted to make sure that the House knows that for the upcoming winter season we will have more equipment in remote, rural and congested urban areas. We'll have more anti-icing liquids on the roads before winter storms so that highways are less slippery when bad weather begins. We will have an improved 511 website with live camera images and time-stamped road condition info, and a new Track My Plow program in two of our areas, and expanding.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Ajax-Pickering on a point of order.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Just on a point of order: When we were introducing some mayors, I could not locate visually the mayor of Ajax, Steve Parish. He has been sitting in the west gallery. Unfortunately, just as I go to say that, a group of them have departed. I wanted to pass on my good wishes to the mayor of Ajax from the 130,000 people there.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The deputy House leader on a point of order.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, I'll let you determine whether this is a point of order. The mayor of the city of St. Catharines, Walter Sendzik, was in the gallery. I did not want to interrupt question period to

introduce him, so I thought it might be appropriate to do so now.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, I do apologize as it's late today, but I see my good friend Don McCabe, the president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, is in the members' east gallery today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I wouldn't have let you interrupt question period anyway.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1144 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

OKTOBERFEST

Mr. Michael Harris: Guten tag und herzlich willkommen 47th Kitchener-Waterloo Oktoberfest.

Kitchener-Waterloo Oktoberfest, otherwise known as Canada's greatest Bavarian festival and the second-largest Oktoberfest in the world, attracts over 700,000 visitors every year, with over \$1.5 million in proceeds being put back into the community.

Waterloo region has a long history of German roots. Kitchener was formerly named Berlin, and a large portion of the population identified themselves as being of German heritage.

What makes Oktoberfest so great is that there is truly something for everyone. Oktoberfest hosts Canada's largest Thanksgiving Day parade, which is viewed by over 1.8 million Canadians nationwide. There are over 48 family, cultural and sporting events, and of course 19 festhallen to experience some Gemütlichkeit.

One of this year's Oktoberfest highlights includes the Hometown Hockey Tour with host Ron MacLean and NHL alumni, which gives families the chance to celebrate hockey and our community pride on national TV.

I must also take a moment to thank the 500 passionate volunteers without whom this festival would not be nearly as successful as it is today. Since 1969, the constant growth and success promoting a unique German heritage experience is a testament to the dynamic volunteers.

I encourage all festival goers of Oktoberfest to come find me and get my official souvenir Oktoberfest pin. And, Speaker, as we say during the festival, Oktoberfest in Kitchener-Waterloo is wunderbar.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Ein Prosit.

BERNIE CAMPBELL AND LES CHAIF

Mr. Percy Hatfield: We lost a good friend in Windsor a few days ago. Bernie Campbell was only 64. He served in the RCMP for 33 years—a lot of that time on the drug squad in Windsor.

I knew Bernie as a reporter, but we were friends who coached our kids in the same ball league in Forest Glade. His wife, Brenda, would look after me when I went to donate blood at the Red Cross.

Bernie had one of those fantastic moustaches. He looked a bit like a younger version of the actor Wilford Brimley.

Bernie was from Nova Scotia. He played the bagpipes in the Windsor Police Pipe Band.

Less than a week after he retired from the Mounties, he started working with the campus police at the University of Windsor.

He was a great guy. He deserved a happy retirement, but he was hit with a rare disease that left him in a wheelchair for the final days of his life. His funeral is tomorrow in Windsor. I won't be able to attend, but I do express condolences to Brenda and the boys, Ian, Peter and James.

Speaker, another old friend passed away recently as well. Les Chaif was a bit of a curmudgeon around city hall in Windsor. He was 82, a lovable guy, a real tax fighter and advocate. He never shied away from offering his opinions on how the mayor and councillors should be spending his tax money.

Les was a veteran of the war in Korea. He tried to recruit me a few times to run for his favourite political parties: the Reform, the Alliance and the Conservatives.

We didn't always agree, but we were friends and I will miss our conversations. Condolences to Mary, his six kids, eight grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

PREGNANCY AND INFANT LOSS AWARENESS DAY

Mr. Mike Colle: October 15 of next week will mark Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Day across the world. Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Day is a remembrance day for pregnancy loss and infant deaths. This day is observed across Canada, as well as throughout the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and throughout these countries. Recognizing October 15 as Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Day allows people to acknowledge the significance of the life of each and every child lost.

Pregnancy and infant loss are brought on by complex issues that cannot be addressed by simple checklists or genetic recommendations. Sadly, in Ontario, 37,000 mothers experience pregnancy and infant loss each year. This day is observed with remembrance ceremonies and candlelight vigils, concluding with the international Wave of Light, a worldwide lighting of candles at 7 p.m. on the 15th.

Here in Ontario, the Peace Bridge in Fort Erie, Niagara Falls and even the CN Tower will be lit up with pink and purple lights in memory of these little angels we have lost. Please do what you can in your own community to support mothers and families who have gone through this gut-wrenching loss of a child.

PAN AM AND PARAPAN AM ATHLETES

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm honoured to rise and recognize five outstanding athletes from my riding, all of whom trained hard and put their best foot forward to clinch big victories at the 2015 Pan Am and Parapan Am Games and make Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound proud: Jason Crone of Shallow Lake; Josh Cassidy, a native of Burgoyne; Karen Van Nest of Wiarton; Josh Farrell of Saugeen Shores; and Kate Sauks of Bognor.

After winning a silver medal at the 2012 London Paralympic Games, Jason Crone came out of retirement to try to win gold at the 2015 Toronto Parapan Am Games. Jason has always made the folks in Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound proud. He first made headlines in 2007 after earning a bronze at the 2008 Beijing Paralympic Games.

Josh Cassidy won his third silver at the Parapan Am Games. He also won a bronze medal in the men's 800-metre T54 wheelchair race. His finish time was one minute and 45.25 seconds.

Karen Van Nest took silver at the Parapan Am Games. In addition to shooting and archery, Karen displayed her rowing skills in 2006 when she won a bronze medal at the world championships.

Josh Farrell, who was named to the national team in 2014, won a gold in the men's F20 shot put with a Parapan record throw of 14.05 metres.

Kate Sauks of Bognor, after graduating with a PhD in rehabilitation sciences and anatomy, became the first University of Toronto athlete at the games to win a medal when she and her rowing partner raced to gold in the women's light-weight double skulls.

We are very proud of these very inspiring athletes, and I congratulate all of them on their extraordinary skills, determination and efforts. On behalf of everyone in Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and everyone in Ontario and Canada, I wish them much continued success at their next stop, the Rio 2016 Olympic Games.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Governments around the world are preparing for the climate summit that will be convened in Paris this December. It's generally expected that the government in Ontario will be bringing forward cap-and-trade and other climate measures when the House returns after October 20.

I have said before and I will say now that the government should bring forward cap-and-trade and other measures for review by a legislative committee. Climate change poses huge challenges; so does action on climate change. There is no easy route forward.

If the government wants to be successful with the measures it introduces, it will need public review of those measures. People will look for measures to be effective, fair and transparent. Without a public review, the task to implement climate action will be hobbled.

I urge the government to build public review into its plans.

ARTHUR McDONALD

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I'm honoured and proud to share that Dr. Arthur McDonald from Queen's University in my riding of Kingston—and-the–Islands has been awarded the 2015 Nobel prize in physics, only the second time in Canadian history that that has happened. He shares this prestigious gold-standard recognition with Tokyo's Takaaki Kajita. In solving the stubborn neutrino puzzle, they have ushered in a new era in physics.

Dr. McDonald's team, two kilometres underground at the Queen's Sudbury Neutrino Observatory, which my colleague MPP Kwinter helped launch in 1987, demonstrated that neutrinos change identities on their way from the sun; ergo, they must have mass.

Neutrinos are the most abundant particles in the universe, after light. Some come from the sun, but even our own bodies produce streams of them. Some 2.5 billion neutrinos pass through a business card every single second, and although their weight is negligible, together they weigh about the same as every visible star in the universe.

This is an excellent example of the importance of supporting pure, curiosity-based research, and half of all that Canadian research, I must say, comes from right here in Ontario.

1510

I'm deeply proud of the province's continued commitment to research, innovation, science and technology. These investments not only ensure our province remains competitive in the global economy; it inspires our highly qualified graduates to follow in Dr. McDonald's footsteps.

Congratulations, Dr. McDonald, and thank you to all of the scientific community, whose passion, dedication and sheer hard work help us to understand. We all claim you as our own today, and we share this wonderful accomplishment with you. Merci beaucoup. Meegwetch. Thank you.

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: The month of October marks the celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month, in which people of Latin origin come together to pay tribute to their shared identity. Hispanic Heritage Month is celebrated widely, with festivities in Canada, the United States and throughout Latin America.

Last year, along with the PC caucus, I was happy to support the Hispanic Heritage Month Act, which proclaimed the month of October as Hispanic Heritage Month, and 2015 marks the inaugural year for the festivities here in Ontario.

In celebration, my colleagues MPP Ted Arnott and MPP Gila Martow brought remarks on behalf of our caucus and our leader, Patrick Brown, at the inaugural Hispanic Heritage Month reception held at Queen's Park last week. I understand from the member from Wellington–Halton Hills that the member from Thornhill

stole the show as she kicked up her heels with the dancers. That's what it's all about.

The Latin community, one of the fastest-growing in the province, has made many valuable contributions to Ontario's growth and development. Ontario is home to more than 400,000 first, second and third generation Canadians of Hispanic origin. It is my hope that all Ontarians will take time during this month to learn more about the history of the Latin community in this province, as well as the important role that Hispanic people play in shaping our social, economic, political and multicultural fabric.

I'm excited to celebrate the vibrant Hispanic culture this month during Ontario's first Hispanic Heritage Month, and I hope my fellow members will join me in doing so.

ADOPTION

Ms. Daiene Vernile: This past Friday, I spent the day like many of my colleagues, meeting with constituents. I was in my riding of Kitchener Centre.

I want to tell you about one couple who made quite an impression on my staff and me. They are selfless, dedicated and very compassionate. They're one of about 60 families in Waterloo region who have adopted older children.

Now, adoption agencies tell us that it's healthy newborns who are the first choice in adoption, but older kids with physical, mental and developmental issues such as fetal alcohol syndrome, autism and emotional trauma from years of abuse—oftentimes nobody wants these kids.

This Waterloo region couple has adopted four children with various developmental issues: first of all, a brother and sister in 2007, and then in 2011 a set of young twins.

I was very happy to share with them news of how our government is improving the adoption system. We're helping more young people connect with waiting families, reducing financial barriers and we're supporting culturally appropriate placements.

There were 862 adoptions in Ontario last year, but 6,400 crown wards are still waiting to be adopted. When I asked this couple, "Why did you decide to adopt kids with developmental issues?" the answer was, quite simply, "Because there's a need."

Children waiting to be adopted share a common sense of desire for a stable, positive and loving environment to help them reach their full potential. I congratulate all parents who make this very selfless commitment.

TD TREE DAYS

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: This past weekend, I had the great opportunity to volunteer with the TD Tree Days program. I joined the good people from the town of Cobourg, Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority and many others at the site of a future park area in Cobourg. It particularly impressed me to see parents teaching their

kids the value of giving back to our wonderful communities.

With a little sweat and hard work, we were able to plant over 300 trees. This is a beautiful beginning to Cobourg's future Cooley Park, which will offer 4.6 acres of open space along Cobourg Creek.

This was one of 150 such events taking place across Canada, with TD employees, their families and friends joining the local volunteers to green up the communities. Launched in Canada in 2010, this program has engaged employees, customers and community partners in four countries. Thousands of volunteers, from Brownies to bankers, have planted over 185,000 trees. In addition, 50,000 trees will be planted across Canada this year.

I'm proud of the town of Cobourg's commitment to preserve, enhance and promote ecological diversity. I learned that when a tree is over 80 years old, its ecological and environmental air-cleaning and oxygen-producing benefits are drastically reduced, making the planting of new trees and reforestation a vital part of our communities and global environment.

Mr. Speaker, this was an awesome experience. I wish to thank the TD Bank and the town of Cobourg for their continued commitment to our global environmental health and well-being.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received a report on intended appointments dated October 6, 2015, from the Standing Committee on Government Agencies.

Pursuant to standing order 108(f)9, the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Social Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 37, An Act respecting Invasive Species / Projet de loi 37, Loi concernant les espèces envahissantes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated June 2, 2015, the bill is ordered for third reading.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH MOIS DE LA PRÉVENTION DU MAUVAIS TRAITEMENT DES ENFANTS

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Today marks the first day of Child Abuse Prevention Month in Ontario. Every October, the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies has an annual Purple Ribbon Campaign to help raise awareness of child abuse prevention.

Thanks to all the members of the House for support of this campaign by wearing your ribbons today. By doing this, you are acknowledging the very serious and important issue of child abuse. We can all agree that child abuse and neglect is completely unacceptable.

Nous sommes toutes et tous d'accord pour dire que les mauvais traitements infligés aux enfants et la négligence sont inacceptables.

Today, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services is launching a public education campaign to inform the general public of its duty to report if a child may be at risk of abuse. All MPPs will receive posters for their constituency offices for this campaign; as well, online ads will target those who may be looking to report abuse.

Speaker, there are more than 2.8 million children and youth who call Ontario their home. Children and youth are the most vulnerable members of any society, and they depend on us for protection. These purple ribbons remind us that we all have a responsibility to protect and keep all children and youth safe. All Ontarians have a legal responsibility to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect. This isn't a new obligation; we're simply highlighting it here today.

Under the Child and Family Services Act, all members of the public, including professionals who work closely with children and youth, must promptly report any reasonable suspicion that a child is or may be in need of protection and do that report to the children's aid society. Child abuse includes physical, sexual and emotional abuse, as well as neglect and risk of harm.

1520

Ontarians should never hesitate to report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect. It's not necessary for a person to be certain a child is or may be in need of protection to make a report to a children's aid society; they only need to have reasonable grounds for their suspicion. "Reasonable grounds" refers to information that an average person using normal and honest judgment would need in order to decide to report.

Members of the public, including professionals who work with children and youth, can find contact information for their local children's aid society by dialling 411 where applicable or by visiting the website of the Ministry of Children and Youth Services.

I want to take this opportunity as well to acknowledge the vital role that all children's aid societies across the province play in keeping young people safe.

Applause.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Yes. Thank you to our children's aid societies.

As a government, we have worked to strengthen the child welfare system in order to prevent cases of child abuse and neglect. We've made progress in helping to better protect vulnerable children and youth. For example, through the community capacity-building program, we provide annual funding to community-based agencies to deliver programs and supports to families involved in the child welfare system and to prevent children and youth from entering or re-entering care.

The government has passed legislation that provides the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth with the authority to investigate matters related to children and youth involved in the child protection system.

As well, my ministry funds the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies to provide a training and education curriculum to support child protection staff in making critical decisions about child safety and to improve outcomes for all children and youth. The training helps child protection workers to exercise their role to support and respond to the needs of children, youth and their families.

We have also reached out to a number of professional associations, including teachers, early childhood educators, firefighters and health care professionals, to increase their awareness and understanding of their duty to report suspected cases of child neglect and abuse under the Child and Family Services Act. These folks are the front-line people who work every day with children and their families. We count on them to understand and exercise their responsibility to report suspected abuse or neglect.

Preventing child abuse and neglect is a collective responsibility. We all have a role to play.

La prévention des mauvais traitements infligés aux enfants et de la négligence est une responsabilité collective. Nous avons toutes et tous un rôle à jouer.

I urge all members of this House and all Ontarians to learn the signs of child abuse and neglect. If you see it, report it. It is the law.

Thank you to everyone out in the community who is making a real difference, day in and day out, in the lives of our children and youth.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Statements by ministries? It is now time for responses.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's an honour today to rise on behalf of the PC caucus to highlight October as Child Abuse Prevention Month. I think many of you know that on my legislative desk I have the pictures of my two children; I've carried them with me through various desks since I was elected in 2007. They have added significance now as I have returned to critic for children and youth. It's a daily reminder for me that the reason we're here is to protect our future generation, to protect our children and to do better.

Our province's children are indeed our future. We have a responsibility to provide every child with the opportunity to succeed and to protect them. I want to

reinforce the importance of reporting any concern you have regarding a child's safety. Last year alone, over 171,000 individuals called a children's aid society in Ontario to report safety concerns about a child. It is part of our duty, in fact, to ensure the safety of our province's most vulnerable. Whether you're a parent, aunt, uncle, older brother or older sister, or even a family friend, we all have a duty to protect the children and youth of our province.

Abuse doesn't have to be physical. There are different forms of abuse that many of us don't traditionally think of, such as neglect. Other forms of abuse include emotional and, of course, sexual abuse. There are also indirect forms of abuse to children, such as seeing or hearing a violent act.

In addition to the different forms of abuse, there are different warning signs for each of these forms of abuse that we all need to be aware of. For example, indicators of neglect may include poor hygiene, frequent absences from school and unattended physical or medical needs, such as lack of glasses or dental work. Indicators of physical abuse include injuries that don't fit an explanation or several injuries at different stages, or the inability to recall how those injuries occurred. We need to be on the lookout for such behaviour and warning signs. If you see odd behaviour and/or injuries, please report it. All it takes is a simple phone call to potentially save a child's life.

Awareness of these issues is critical to helping our province's most vulnerable. Being aware of these issues will help prevent tragic cases like Katelynn Sampson and Jeffrey Baldwin. It was, in fact, oversight errors that led to these tragic deaths that could have been avoided. Had someone looked a little deeper into the backgrounds of these caregivers before granting custody, these deaths would not have occurred.

In fact, there are gaps in our province's child welfare system that need to be addressed. There were 103 recommendations made as part of the Jeffrey Baldwin inquiry to improve Ontario's child welfare system. One of the major recommendations that came out of the inquiry was the call for an immediate implementation of the child protection information network. CPIN, as it's known, would establish a standardized information system connecting all children's aid societies across Ontario to access that information.

Unfortunately, we are too slow in implementing this very critical recommendation. The Jeffrey Baldwin inquiry recommended that CPIN be in all children's aid protection offices across Ontario by the end of 2016. At this point, we are hearing that the complete rollout will not happen until 2020. Only five of 47 child protection agencies across Ontario are currently using CPIN. That's not good enough for Ontario's children. We need this system to be in place immediately to protect our most vulnerable.

This government is moving too slowly on the implementation of those 103 recommendations. Only 20% of the recommendations have been implemented or are in the process of being implemented. No one needs to be satisfied with those results.

I want to stress again the need for everyone to be aware of children abuse and to not be afraid to report your concern if you believe a child is in danger. I want to finish off, as the minister did, by acknowledging the excellent work of our front-line workers and service providers across the province who work tirelessly to serve our province's future generations. Thank you for all you do to protect our children.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further members' statements.

Miss Monique Taylor: This month, we acknowledge the importance of families and communities working together to prevent child abuse and to promote the social and emotional well-being of our children. Every child is born into a world filled with immeasurable possibilities. As elected officials, we must ensure all of our young people have the support they need to realize their limitless potential.

Regardless of who they are or the circumstances of their birth, each child deserves to be cared for, valued and kept safe from harm. Sadly, abuse and neglect spoils this promise for too many vulnerable young boys and girls each year in our province. It is contrary to the principles of good parenting and caretaking and must not be tolerated.

The Ministry of Children and Youth Services has a responsibility and a duty to look out for the best interests of our innocent and sometimes very vulnerable children. Proper oversight is needed immediately for children in care. That is why I tabled Bill 117, the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth Amendment Act, which would require all agencies and service providers in Ontario to inform the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth if they become aware of the death or critical injuries of a child where a children's aid society has been involved within 12 months of the death or injury.

1530

This bill would also improve the way the advocate's office can do its job by giving them quicker access to information. Passing this bill would be a step in the right direction and a true commitment to the children of our province.

Here is a quote from the advocate's 2011-12 report: "The provincial advocate continues to face roadblocks in accessing information about children and youth in our mandate who have died, and the results of investigations into allegations of abuse against young people in the youth justice system. As a result, the office is limited in its ability to perform its duty as an advocate for children and youth."

By passing this bill and changing the legislation, the advocate will be able to provide valuable information and encourage systemic changes that could keep our children safer. All children have the fundamental human right to live free from violence and abuse. We as individuals, parents and communities must rededicate ourselves to ending the cycle of harm that too many of our children in this province endure.

This month we shed light on the unthinkable injustices that occur far too often to our most vulnerable, but we

also acknowledge the love and courage it takes to raise a child. A loving family and a nurturing community is the best foundation for a promising childhood, and when parents and caregivers have support, they're more likely to provide safe and healthy environments for children.

It is important for all people to recognize the signs of child neglect and of physical, sexual and emotional abuse. Reporting any concerns could protect a child and connect a family with the help they need. You could potentially save a life or begin the process of healing.

I challenge our communities to be proactive in promoting child abuse awareness strategies, and I commend all parents and caregivers who demonstrate unconditional love and who are a safe haven for their children.

I would like to end with a quote from a book from Laura Davis named *Allies in Healing*. It paints a vivid picture of the detrimental and lifelong effects of child abuse. The quote goes as this:

"Abuse manipulates and twists a child's natural sense of trust and love. Her innocent feelings are belittled or mocked and she learns to ignore her feelings. She can't afford to feel the full range of feelings in her body while she's being abused—pain, outrage, hate, vengeance, confusion, arousal. So she short-circuits them and goes numb. For many children, any expression of feelings, even a single tear, is cause for more ... abuse. Again, the only recourse is to shut down. Feelings go underground."

Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

PETITIONS

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government's proposed Ontario Retirement Pension Plan (ORPP) is a mandatory pension plan which would target small businesses and their employees; and

"Whereas there has been little to no discussion on what the costs would be, or who would pay them; and

"Whereas affected businesses would be hit with up to \$1,643 per employee, per year in new payroll taxes starting in 2017; and

"Whereas affected employees would have up to \$1,643 per year extra deducted from their paycheques, and it would take 40 years for them to see the full pension benefits; and

"Whereas the Canadian Federation of Independent Business predicts the unemployment rate in Ontario would rise by 0.5%, and there would be a reduction in wages over the longer term; and

"Whereas all of these costs would be shouldered exclusively by small businesses and their employees; and

"Whereas public sector and big business employees who already have a pension plan will not be asked to pay into the plan;

"We, the undersigned, do not support implementation of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan and petition the government of Ontario to axe the pension tax."

I fully support it and will send it with page Kelly.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas mental illness affects people of all ages, educational and income levels, and cultures; and

"Whereas one in five Canadians will experience a mental illness in their lifetime and only one third of those who need mental health services in Canada actually receive them; and

"Whereas mental illness is the second leading cause of human disability and premature death in Canada; and

"Whereas the cost of mental health and addictions to the Ontario economy is \$34 billion; and

"Whereas the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions made 22 recommendations in their final report; and

"Whereas the Improving Mental Health and Addictions Services in Ontario Act, 2015, seeks to implement all 22 of these recommendations;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass the Improving Mental Health and Addictions Services in Ontario Act, 2015, which:

"(1) Brings all mental health services in the province under one ministry, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care;

"(2) Establishes a single body to design, manage and coordinate all mental health and addictions systems throughout the province;

"(3) Ensures that programs and services are delivered consistently and comprehensively across Ontario;

"(4) Grants the Ombudsman full powers to audit or investigate providers of mental health and addictions services in Ontario."

I fully agree with this petition, will affix my name, and give it to Siena to take up to the desk.

LUNG HEALTH

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children. Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

"In the Ontario Lung Association report, *Your Lungs, Your Life*, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and this figure is

estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To allow for deputations on MPP Kathryn McGarry's private member's bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario Lung Health Action Plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

"Once debated at committee, to expedite Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, through the committee stage and back to the Legislature for third and final reading; and to immediately call for a vote on Bill 41 and to seek royal assent immediately upon its passage."

I sign this petition. I agree with it, and I pass it to the page.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean Program was implemented only as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and

"Whereas vehicle emissions have declined so significantly from 1998 to 2010 that they are no longer among the major domestic contributors of smog in Ontario; and

"Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions is the result of factors other than Drive Clean, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

"Whereas the environment minister has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is less reliable and prone to error; and

"Whereas the new Drive Clean test has caused the failure rate to double in less than two months as a result of technical problems with the new emissions testing method; and

"Whereas this new emissions test has caused numerous false 'fails,' which have resulted in the overcharging of testing fees for Ontario drivers and car dealerships, thereby causing unwarranted economic hardship and stress;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the Minister of the Environment takes immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean program."

I'm please to affix my signature, and I'll send it to the table with page Laura.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France G  linas: It's my pleasure to read this petition that was signed by Mr. Hector Constantin, who is

a constituent from Blezard Valley, in my riding. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government has made positron emission tomography (PET) scanning a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients" under certain conditions; and

"Whereas, since October 2009, insured PET scans are performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with Health Sciences North, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;"

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through Health Sciences North, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario."

1540

I fully support this petition and will ask my page, Grace, to bring it to the Clerk.

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have a petition here addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas it is absolutely crucial that more is done to provide Ontarians retirement financial security which they can rely on;

"Whereas the federal government has refused to partner with our government to ensure that Ontarians have a secure retirement plan;

"Whereas more than three million Ontarians rely on the Canada Pension Plan alone, that currently does not provide enough to support an adequate standard of living;

"Whereas the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan will provide the safe and stable retirement that Ontarians need;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all members of the Ontario assembly support a plan to move forward with an Ontario-made pension retirement plan that will provide a financially secure retirement for Ontarians."

I agree with this petition. I affix my name and send it down with Jaleelah.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I have a petition entitled "Privatizing Hydro One: Another Wrong Choice.

"Whereas once you privatize hydro, there's no return; and

"We'll lose billions in reliable annual revenues for schools and hospitals; and

"We'll lose our biggest economic asset and control over our energy future; and

"We'll pay higher and higher hydro bills just like what's happened elsewhere;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To stop the sale of Hydro One and make sure Ontario families benefit from owning Hydro One now and for generations to come."

I fully support this petition, will sign it and send it with page Grace.

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I have a petition here entitled "Planning for Ontario's Future." It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas it is absolutely crucial that more is done to provide Ontarians retirement financial security which they can rely on;

"Whereas the federal government has refused to partner with our government to ensure that Ontarians have a secure retirement plan;

"Whereas more than three million Ontarians rely on the Canada Pension Plan alone, that currently does not provide enough to support an adequate standard of living;

"Whereas the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan will provide the safe and stable retirement that Ontarians need;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all members of the Ontario assembly support a plan to move forward with an Ontario-made pension retirement plan that will provide a financially secure retirement for Ontarians."

I agree with this petition. I'm going to sign it and hand it over to page Gabriel.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mme France Gélinas: I have this petition from Tina Trotter, who lives in my riding in Sudbury. It reads as follows:

"Privatizing Hydro One: Another Wrong Choice.

"Whereas once you privatize Hydro One, there's no return; and

"Whereas we'll lose billions in reliable annual revenues for schools and hospitals; and

"Whereas we'll lose our biggest economic asset and control over our energy future; and

"Whereas we'll pay higher and higher hydro bills just like what's happened elsewhere;"

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"To stop the sale of Hydro One and make sure Ontario families benefit from owning Hydro One now and for generations to come."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Wendy to bring it to the Clerk.

LUNG HEALTH

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of

whom are children. Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

"In the Ontario Lung Association report, Your Lungs, Your Life, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To allow for deputations on MPP Kathryn McGarry's private member's bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario Lung Health Action Plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

"Once debated at committee, to expedite Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, through the committee stage and back to the Legislature for third and final reading; and to immediately call for a vote on Bill 41 and to seek royal assent immediately upon its passage."

I agree with this bill, I affix my name to it and send it with page Eastyn.

POET LAUREATE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas poets laureate have been officially recognized at all levels of Canadian government and in at least 15 countries around the world; and

"Whereas the establishment of our own poet laureate for the province of Ontario would promote literacy and celebrate Ontario culture and heritage, along with raising public awareness of poetry and of the spoken word; and

"Whereas the member from Windsor-Tecumseh has introduced private member's Bill 71 to establish the Office of Poet Laureate for the province of Ontario as a non-partisan attempt to promote literacy, to focus attention on our amazing poets and to give new focus to the arts community in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To support the establishment of the Office of Poet Laureate as an officer of the Ontario Legislature and that private member's Bill 71, An Act to establish the Poet Laureate of Ontario, receive swift passage through the legislative process."

Obviously, Speaker, I agree fully and will sign my name to it, and give it to Jacob to bring up to the desk.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have a petition entitled "Petition: Amalgamation Review, Flamborough," and it's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the government of Ontario created the 'new city' of Hamilton on January 1, 2001, under the City of Hamilton Act, 1999 by amalgamating six lower-tier municipalities including the town of Flamborough and a single upper-tier municipality;

"Whereas on April 13, 2000, a press release from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs announced, 'The new city of Hamilton is one step closer to lower taxes as a result of legislation (amalgamation) introduced today by the minister,' and on July 14, 2000, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, Tony Clement, announced that to prevent taxes from skyrocketing for Flamborough taxpayers, Flamborough will stay in Hamilton.

"Thirteen years since Minister Clement's announcement, taxes for Flamborough have skyrocketed. They have increased 57.3%; and

"Whereas Bill 26, the Savings and Restructuring Act of December 1999, and the City of Hamilton Act, 1999, were adopted to achieve the stated purposes of fewer politicians while maintaining effective representation; lower taxes; better service delivery; less bureaucracy; better accountability."

"In fact, over the past 13 years, none of the above has been achieved. We now have bigger, more costly and more bureaucratic government. Staff personnel pre-amalgamation totalled 3,657 excluding police (O'Brien report 11/99). As of December 20/12, the employee count has increased to 7,559, excluding police, library and HECFI; and

"Whereas in December 2003, March 2005, November 2005, September 2006 and September 2008 independent surveys were held in Flamborough, all of which showed a very high degree of dissatisfaction with our present form of government; and

"Accordingly, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to set up a commission for an independent study and report which would cover the fiscal and social impact of amalgamation upon the citizens of Flamborough. It should compare the average cost per household of most core services, general government, fire and public works both before and after amalgamation as well as a comparative analysis of taxation per household and the size of bureaucracy."

I agree with the petition, affix my name and send it down with Wendy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I would like to remind all members in the Legislature that if you do have a very lengthy petition, you have my approval to shorten it. Give us, perhaps, the shortened version of it.

1550

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GREAT LAKES PROTECTION ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LA PROTECTION DES GRANDS LACS

Mr. Murray moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 66, An Act to protect and restore the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin / Projet de loi 66, Loi visant la protection et le rétablissement du bassin des Grands Lacs et du fleuve Saint-Laurent.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Mr. Murray has moved third reading of Bill 66. Back to the minister: Mr. Murray.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I said earlier, I want to thank the member for St. Catharines, my friend and the former Minister of the Environment, who is one of a number of ministers who worked very hard to get this through the House. To the member for St. Catharines: I want to thank him for his leadership, as he really deservedly should be recognized for his work here.

To my colleagues on both sides of the aisles who have supported this: I think this is a bill in the truest and best sense of parliamentary democracy. It's something that reflects back on the House in the many contributions by many members over the years who have wanted to see this very important part of our planet and our province protected.

There's much that could be said—and I'm sure many people will talk about specifics of the Great Lakes. It's interesting, because having lived outside Ontario, the enormity of them is really quite extraordinary. This is the largest freshwater coastline in the world—over 10,000 kilometres of coastline just around the Great Lakes. The Ontario side is larger and contains more coastline than all of the eight border states on the lakes combined together.

The lakes are under quite significant stress. While there's been many measures by governments past and present to try to preserve the lakes, there's an incredible emergence of new challenges. As we know, we have excessive levels of nutrients in the lakes. This is not to blame anyone. There are a number of reasons causing that and one of them is changing climate and changing weather, which has meant that we get much more abrupt and intense rainfalls. Many of us will remember in southern Ontario that we had, in one day in July two years ago—or three years ago now, actually—the entire rain that normally falls in this province in two months. So you can imagine that that intense amount of rain hitting farmers' fields drives a lot of nutrients into the lakes. And we have challenges with municipal systems and sewage.

We have a number of problems with pharmaceuticals. I remember my friend Pauline Browes, a former Conservative member of the federal Parliament, who I worked with on the national round table. I never really appreciated it, but she used to come to the national round table and say, "We have a real problem with pharmaceuticals." She would come up with these pictures of creatures that looked rather peculiar because they had multiple body parts. This is the kind of thing that almost sounds science fiction-like. But we have concentrations in some parts of our lakes of pharmaceuticals that are distorting the gender of many of the species in there, causing problems with rehabilitation.

We have road salt at unprecedented levels, which is impacting on our lakes and interacting with other things.

We have plastic microbeads, which were never a problem before—just in the last several years. They have become present in our lakes with such incredible concentrations that you can open up fish now and find fishes' stomachs full of plastic microbeads.

We have a greater range of pesticides. One of the challenges with neurotoxic pesticides—and there's a study that will be released shortly in Quebec of all 20 of its great lakes—is that systemic neurotoxic pesticides break down in water. They're water-soluble. While we know there's issues with bees and pollinators—our bees are terrestrial invertebrates—the base of the food chain in the Great Lakes is our water invertebrates, the small creatures that fish eat, which are very susceptible to neurotoxic pesticides because they're very similar in their body morphology to bees.

We also have an incredible challenge with other types of plastics and pollutants, some of them urban-based and some of them rural. That really doesn't matter; it's the combination of them. We also know that the interactions between pharmaceuticals, road salt, different types of pesticides and plastics—plastics tend to absorb these kinds of materials. So it's the complexity of the number of pollutants and the total cumulative effects of how they are interacting in our waters.

We also know that we have challenges with invasive species in a way that we never had before, as global trade has brought zebra mussels. The Asian carp, Mr. Speaker, are now only 30 kilometres—or 30 miles, to use the American word; it's a bit further than 30 kilometres—down the Detroit River, and they're fast approaching. Governor Snyder in Michigan has taken this on as a personal commitment, to try and keep these very large fish from colonizing our lakes. We've had challenges because we've found a few of them, as you know, because in some cultural traditions, those fish are eaten live or have to be captured live. There's a trade in them that also is exposed culturally for people who are practising what is a very fine culture, but not recognizing that putting those fish into the lake to keep them alive is a very dangerous thing.

Some of our most difficult challenges with the Great Lakes are at the micro level. We have a lot of microbial life, tiny crustaceans that are vulnerable to acidification levels. Carbon dioxide levels right now, which are over 400 parts per million in our atmosphere, are not only causing climate change; they're also causing the acidification of our oceans and also our lakes. In Ontario and the northern Great Lakes states, one of the areas that is most critical—I see that the member for Nickel Belt is present and paying attention; I think she is probably quite aware of this, representing a lot of these small lakes in her region. They are seeing levels of acidity that we have not seen before. This is a particular problem across northern Ontario in the Great Lakes watershed, because that level of acidification is just enough for these very small creatures to not be able to form their shells. When

they can't form their shells, another of the sort of building blocks of the food chain in the Great Lakes watershed is compromised.

When you think of all of the layers of things that we are now dealing with and then you put climate change on top of that—and probably one of the most dramatic and visible impacts of climate change has been in our Great Lakes. Many members in this House who represent Great Lakes communities, which is a great number of us present—including myself, who represents the constituency that has the great honour of having this Legislature in it, and my two friends from Windsor across the way there would know this because they're right at the nexus of some of the most important connectivity within the Great Lakes—will notice that those water levels dropped dramatically up until about three years ago. You'll remember many of the stories. My friend from Huron—Bruce, who is across the way, would know that, down her way and up around Lake Superior and Lake Huron, people's docks and much of our important, critical marine infrastructure were high and dry, hundreds of metres from water. We remember turning on our nightly news and seeing these dramatic pictures of people's cottages, their boats, in small towns where ferries and marine infrastructure is important to tourism and fisheries, far away from the lakes. That was just three or four years ago.

It's interesting now that, with the increasing warmth in the Arctic, the polar vortex is reforming and relocating, becoming detached from its normal pattern, moving south of Hudson Bay into the Lake Superior basin. What has that done, Mr. Speaker? That has caused more intense wet and cold weather in the Great Lakes watershed area, meaning that we are now, only three years later, having record high levels. In the spring, the ice is so severe and the water levels so high that those same docks which were high and dry are now being destroyed by extraordinarily high-record water levels, and the movement of ice in spring destroys that marine infrastructure.

This is the crazy thing about disruptive climate change, and we'll feel it most particularly in the Great Lakes: that only a few years ago, the problem was high and dry docks. Now we have mayors and reeves and wardens from small communities, and councillors and business leaders and people in the fishery and tourism industries, pointing out that the high water levels and the extraordinary ice buildup is causing the destruction of those same things—the exact opposite problem—making adaptation and preparation for these things very, very, very difficult.

1600

This is not an onerous act. It's a very different kind of approach to legislation. Some people have called this coercive, involuntary, or that it might impose some requirements on municipalities. It doesn't. It's an entirely voluntary, collaborative bill which, through the Great Lakes Guardians' Council, brings everyone together—First Nations, people in tourism, fishery, municipal

leaders, businesses, communities and ministers who have responsibility in this area—to institutionalize our Great Lakes strategy as a province, which many of you are aware of and have been supportive of, and to look for capacity, because attached to this is an ongoing commitment of \$15 million to invest in the Great Lakes.

We also have the Great Lakes Guardian Community Fund which, I would say to all members, closes on October 23. These are small grants that go out—usually about 80 to 100 of them go out every year—to communities all around the Great Lakes and Great Lakes watershed. Many members present here have organizations that have received these grants annually. These are amazing little grants that help community groups—everything from 4-H clubs to local schools and conservation groups—to actually do things to fight everything from phragmites to invasive species, to looking at restoration of communities.

We also, through these strategies and through the collaboration, identify key issues. One of the successes that came out of some of the early work done by community groups was the conditions of Randle Reef in Hamilton Harbour. This government invested—continuing a long tradition of concern—over \$46 million with our partners in the municipality of the city of Hamilton and with the federal government, to improve the conditions in Randle Reef in the Hamilton area. These are very important things.

The other piece that I am particularly interested in—my friend Mark Mattson with the Waterkeeper says, “Our goal is that our Great Lakes should be fishable, swimmable and drinkable,” and they are not all those things right now—is that one of the things that this bill does is it requires the government to report on the quality of lakes. Working with my colleague from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, who also has some responsibility here, to work with community groups to take the enormous amount of data that we collect on the Great Lakes and put it out there publicly in a way that people can understand and use that data to monitor the lakes and to be effective—Mr. Speaker, I won’t go on much longer.

My friend from Windsor—Tecumseh talked about poetry and things. We sometimes get so literal and scientific and cognitive in our world views about these things. There has been a great deal written about the Great Lakes, and I just wanted to thank Her Honour, the Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell, because she has a great art exhibit that I highly recommend to people to go and look at. It’s called Identity: Art Inspired by the Great Lakes. It’s paintings, drawings and photography of the Great Lakes by Ontarians and by visitors to our province. It’s just literally in this building, if you have a chance to go and visit, in the Lieutenant Governor’s rooms. She’s extended an invitation to us all. It’s an extraordinary collection of art. I think as Ontarians and Canadians you’ll be enormously proud when you see the incredible talent of so many Ontarians and so many visitors who have come here.

Sometimes we forget that art and sometimes stories are much better told. I’d like to just close by putting a poem into the record, if I may, Mr. Speaker, because I think sometimes poets say things better than politicians. This is a poem called Great Lakes, by Smoky Hoss:

In the big lake
wide waves flow,
into an unruly caprice
that ever onward grows and goes—
Vast waters
without end,
an eternal immensity
where, it seems, life and death converse and blend—
Always it rises
to fall back upon itself again and again,
only bound
by a greater force within the wind—

When you step into the waters
nothing is ever the same;
the feeling of flying
washes you away far, to a place with no name—
The water is something
that connects anything
to everything;
depth to height
width to length
weakness to strength—

In the large and looming waters of life
we are all sure to swim, and swim,
awaiting One big wave
to take us home to the shore,
restful once again—

I want to thank one of Ontario’s great poets, Smoky Hoss, who I think probably describes that emotional feeling, if you’ve ever stood in Lake Gitchie Gumees—just the enormity of it—and looked up at the stars and looked at the depth and breadth of that lake. The world seems bigger. Things seem more possible. Space and the universe somehow seem comprehensible in their enormity. We can take great pride in our attachment to this very fragile, lonely little blue planet that seems so much at risk. Maybe the lake says something that will inspire us all to cherish each other and our planet a little bit more.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: First off, I’d like to say that I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the House today specifically with regards to Bill 66, The Great Lakes Protection Act, 2015.

As you know, I hail from the great riding of Huron—Bruce, and I know first-hand how important the Great Lakes are to our environment, our communities as well as to our economy.

Mr. Speaker, if you should happen to be unfamiliar with the riding, the western side of Huron—Bruce is

bordered by Lake Huron. It extends from Grand Bend right through Goderich, Amberley and Kincardine, to the north side of Southampton. We have a lot of activity that stems from that shoreline.

I think it's safe to say that we all care about our Great Lakes here in Ontario and as MPPs for this amazing Legislative Assembly, and it's important to recognize that all Great Lakes have a significant impact on the daily lives of Ontario residents.

I heard the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change speak to the importance of our waters being drinkable, swimmable and fishable. It reminds me of the number of deputations that we had a couple of weeks ago—and I just want to give a moment's recognition to all of the stakeholders who took time to travel to Toronto or to Queen's Park and make sure their voice was heard. I appreciate that very much.

There was one deputation that I was taken with; it came from Lake Ontario Waterkeeper. I just want to quote part of the submission that was included with it. Lake Ontario Waterkeeper said, "You should not pass the act just because environmentalists support it. You pass the act because it is the smartest investment in the province's future that a government can make."

Well, Speaker, that comment stuck with me, because we do want to make smart investments, and reflecting on the ability of this government to get Bill 66 right worries me a little bit. Did we see a smart investment when it came to Ornge, eHealth, gas plants etc.? I'm afraid not. We do have to take time to really make sure we understand the ramifications proposed through Bill 66, because the implications and ramifications are so far-reaching.

I just want to start off, in terms of working our way through the particular bill, by sharing section 1. It says that Bill 66 is geared to "protect and restore the ecological health of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin; and to create opportunities for individuals and communities to become involved" in its protection and restoration. I would suggest to everyone in the House today to please remember this specific statement as we proceed, particularly that statement's allusion to individuals and community involvement. Because as we heard from various stakeholders, and as we've done our homework and research on Bill 66, we worry about that very thing. But I'll come back to that in a few minutes.

Right now, I would like to take a look at protecting Ontario's natural landscape and resources. I don't think anyone here today would deem the concept of protecting our Great Lakes unworthy, but it's Bill 66 in its totality that causes one to worry. For instance, it's interesting, because when we were working through clause-by-clause for Bill 66 over the last couple of weeks, we found it very disappointing—"we" being the PC Party of Ontario—that the Liberals failed to seriously consider six key issues that we highlighted in this current bill.

1610

We identified that this bill could very well strip away local autonomy. We also recognized that this bill could

very well introduce yet more red tape that would further burden municipalities as well as Ontario taxpayers and stakeholders. We are also concerned that with regard to the geographically funded initiatives—geographically focused; that's a Freudian slip, because the GFI's, geographically focused initiatives, don't have any funding details attached to them. It makes us worry: Where is this money actually going to be coming from?

Another significant issue that we touched on was the development of industrial wind turbines. We were very adamant in our amendments that we did not want to see further development of a type of energy source that is not needed in Ontario. We did not want to see that develop in our Great Lakes. Guess what happened, Speaker? The Liberal government voted that particular amendment down.

We were also concerned about the lack of respect demonstrated for landowners. We also reminded the government that during ROMA and Good Roads, the Premier herself touted the relevance and the importance of applying a rural lens to every piece of legislation to make sure that it was relevant and not a burden or redundant with regards to other legislation that was already in place. But yet again, there was a trend here. They totally ignored that as well, and so I worry. Is this government just about talking the talk and they will not walk it? Because at the end of the day, the cost of just talking the talk will be borne by Ontario taxpayers.

I have to reflect on the fact that this past March I reached out to 444 municipalities in Ontario. I sent them a letter on behalf of my caucus members in the PC Party, and I explained to them our position on Bill 66. Speaker, I'm really pleased to share with you that people understood and appreciated the outreach that I did.

I also sent with this letter highlights of what the rural lens truly represents. The fact of the matter is, this government needs to pull up its socks, because people are watching and they're concerned that they will not recognize what will happen with redundant legislation.

I want to talk a little bit more about our local municipalities. They're fully aware, in terms of protecting our Great Lakes, that they must act as responsible stewards of such a valuable resource. You know what? They've already been taking steps to do just that. Everybody knows. Residents throughout Ontario understand the importance of the Great Lakes alone, but under the current framework of this bill, loopholes allow much local municipal autonomy to be stripped away.

Before I get too far on this, I just want to share with everyone that this morning we met with representatives of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative. We met with mayors from across Ontario and our neighbouring states. They said and shared key messages that demonstrated how they want to see this government care for our Great Lakes. In fact, I believe the phrase that was used over and over again was they want to make sure that we, as opposition, hold this government to account with regard to phosphorus loading, the management of phragmites, the loss of autonomy and what any ill-advised

schemes might cost municipalities. They are also very concerned that their voices are not being heard and they're not at the table being consulted with.

There's a lot to talk about in that regard, but I go back to that very first section of Bill 66 where they—"they" being the Liberal government—said that individuals and communities must be consulted. In fact, it was interesting; during our meeting today, Mayor Randy Hope from Chatham-Kent specifically stressed the need for inclusion and public consultations, particularly with residents and elected officials from the Great Lakes-St Lawrence River basin areas. I think it's safe to say that we know consultation in this regard was very limited.

We heard, through many deputations, that the local voice should be a number one priority. Time and again, stakeholder after stakeholder said a couple of weeks ago that to deal with the Great Lakes properly, we should not have a guardian council; we should have regional councils that understand the local issues and understand the local ecological health of each of their respective lakes so that we can move forward in protecting our Great Lakes. But alas, as I said, one of our concerns in this bill is the striking of a guardian council—the hand-selected guardian council. Who is hand-selecting this guardian council? Well, it just so happens to be the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. Do we trust that hand selection? Absolutely not, because look what happened when there was a small group of people making a decision that had far-reaching impacts. In this example, I'm talking about neonicotinoids. A small group made a big decision that will have lasting, far-reaching, negative financial impacts on the farming community in this province. We can't let that happen again. We should not be allowing a small group, like a hand-selected guardian council, to make decisions over all of our Great Lakes.

Do you know, Speaker, that under Bill 66, it says that interested parties must consult with the minister and receive approval for geographically focused initiatives at the proposal stage? Thus, interpreting that, you would think that the minister may very well be in a position to influence the proposal from its inception. The proposal is to include a description of the costs and benefits, as well as the strategy to finance the project. It's the minister who ultimately decides on the initiatives, after consulting with the other Great Lakes ministers. Again, a small, hand-picked group may set targets relating to the Great Lakes-St Lawrence River basin and loss of wetlands.

We hear that all initiatives should be geographically focused, but this is where we have yet another concern. We concur with the deputations that came in to Queen's Park to share that they are concerned about targets. Where are these targets coming from? Again, when you take a look at what happened with the neonics and the ban that was implemented, those targets—

Mr. Arthur Potts: Aspirational targets.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Those aspirational targets came out of nowhere. Was the industry that was completely affected by this aspirational target consulted?

Absolutely not. Where is that particular sector? Well, they've gone to court seeking a stay of the regulations. This is the direction this government is going. Aspirational or not, it's the wrong direction, and they should be ashamed of what they're imposing.

It's an interesting time, because as we take a look at our Great Lakes, we want people at our local level making a difference. The Georgian Bay Association, during deputations, Minister, said they were looking for bottom-up leadership. Does that sound like a hand-selected guardian council to you? I think not.

It was also interesting; there was another deputation from the Sierra Club Canada Foundation. They shared that in terms of wetlands along Lake Erie, there are only two wetlands left. Some people in this House may not fully comprehend the significance of wetlands, but if there are only two left, do you think a guardian council hand-picked by the minister here in Toronto will really understand what is needed to protect those wetlands? I think not. It should be local people around the shoreline of Lake Erie.

1620

Another deputation was shared from Nature Canada. I was taken by their deputation as well because they talked about protecting and restoring "the natural habitats and biodiversity of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin, including critical habitat for migratory birds, bats and insects, such as important bird and biodiversity areas."

Interesting that this concern should be considered when it comes to protecting the Great Lakes. Why isn't it being considered in Prince Edward-Hastings with regard to the development of industrial wind turbines?

We need to be listening more to our local stakeholders who care and take time to exercise their voice. I worry that the whole purpose of the guardians' council is to stifle that voice and to browbeat. But ladies and gentlemen of the House, I think we know that local autonomy is very important, as are our stakeholders. We on this side of the House, in opposition, feel that Bill 66 is the wrong direction when it comes to protecting Ontarians and our Great Lakes in that regard.

It's interesting when we talk about industrial wind turbines. Again, I want to revisit the fact that while we were going clause by clause in committee, the Liberal government specifically voted against an amendment that we put forward prohibiting the development of industrial wind turbines in the Great Lakes.

Speaker, I had the wonderful opportunity to represent Ontario at the Great Lakes Legislative Caucus just a couple of weekends ago with the member from Kingston and the Islands, as well as Speaker Levac. It was held in Buffalo. We had a wonderful introduction of how they are working through reclamation of their lakeshore. We've seen the wonderful work they're doing in terms of their brownfields. I asked a representative of the Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper what would happen if somebody tried to propose industrial wind turbines in Lake Erie. She said, unequivocally, that there would be a lot of trouble raised because turbines do not belong in the Great

Lakes. I hope, with all my heart, that this stays true for every riding in Ontario.

Interjection.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: They tried it in Kingsville.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm hearing a comment shared that they tried it in Scarborough, but it became an election issue. They tried it in Kingsville. But when it became an election issue, Speaker, of course it went nowhere.

When it's all said and done, I think we have to recognize that this bill is nothing but environmental photo-ops. The geographically focused initiatives, if they're top down and not locally driven, may lend themselves to more environmentalism photo-ops.

I'm concerned about that because I'd like to take my final minutes in this debate to revisit the fact that the OFA, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, shared in their deputation that the Great Lakes Protection Act replicates existing laws: the Environmental Protection Act, Ontario Water Resources Act, Nutrient Management Act, Pesticides Act, Clean Water Act, Drainage Act, Lakes and Rivers Improvement Act, Endangered Species Act, the Planning Act and associated provincial policy statements.

In fact, the federation of agriculture went on to share that there were a lot of redundancies. For instance, the Environmental Protection Act's purpose statement is "to provide for the protection and conservation of the natural environment." It is intended to be very broad in scope.

The Ontario Water Resources Act's purpose statement is "to provide for the conservation, protection and management of Ontario's waters and for their efficient and sustainable use, in order to promote Ontario's long-term environmental, social and economic well-being."

The purpose statement for Bill 66 is quite straightforward: "to protect and restore the ecological health of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin."

Well, Speaker, there's redundancy time and time again. That's what we've tried to demonstrate during first reading and second reading, by the introduction of our amendments that we made in committee, as well as our debate here today in third reading.

If we are truly meant to be protecting our Great Lakes, Bill 66 needs to be stronger. It needs to be stronger because, from a local level—the community of Ajax, for instance, in their deputation suggested that we should be taking a look at the cladophora issue that is generated from phosphorus overloading. We also should be taking a look at the community in Georgian Bay with phragmites. They have an issue whereby phragmites are invading their water intake, and if they don't get that under control, they may have no other option than to extend their water intake. This is a municipality in the Georgian Bay area that represents 10,000 people. To extend that water intake, it will cost \$10 million. How on earth are municipalities going to afford that?

We need to be very, very careful when we talk about protecting our Great Lakes, and understand that the economic impacts ultimately will be burdened on to the

people at the local level—that will make a difference. We cannot support a bill that strips away local autonomy, that refuses to protect our Great Lakes against industrial wind turbines and refuses to listen to our local voices because of that concept of a guardians' council. We cannot leave that much power in the hands of a select few.

With that, I will share the rest of my time with my colleague from York-Simcoe.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I hope every member of this House finds that this bill, the Great Lakes Protection Act, is worthy of support.

I represent a part of the province that has great respect for the value of the Great Lakes. I live in Windsor, in the riding of Windsor-Tecumseh. We live on a 100-mile peninsula, surrounded by water on three sides: Lake Erie, the Detroit River—by the way, Speaker, I'll let you in on a little secret: some people say the river is really just a strait and not a river at all, but nonetheless—and on the third side, Lake St. Clair, where the freighters pass through on their way to the St. Clair River; Lakes Huron, Michigan and Superior, looking at it from the downward side. The ships make their way past our homes, cottages and farms on their way to Lake Erie and, thanks to the Welland Canal, Lake Ontario and on to the St. Lawrence Seaway.

We know the value of the Great Lakes. We know the importance of a healthy ecosystem. We have seen the Great Lakes used as a political football on both sides of the border, and we welcome any positive change to protect these waterways. Mind you, we would like to see more positive change in the bill with real timelines, goals, target deadlines and, most of all, substantial amounts of money so that we can see some actual results.

Nearly 20 years ago, the great Canadian author Pierre Berton wrote a coffee-table book about the Great Lakes. He saw Lake Superior as "remorseless and masculine." Lake Huron, with its 30,000 islands, reminded Mr. Berton of "a fussy maiden aunt," while Lake Michigan, half wild to the north and heavily industrialized in the south, he saw as "an errant uncle." Pierre Berton said that Lake Erie "is a wilful ingenue of changeable mood and false promise." This great Canadian author felt Lake Ontario was but "a complacent child."

I will sprinkle several passages from his book during this presentation, and I'll begin with a quote from the opening introduction: "Those of us who live and work beside the Great Lakes accept their magnitude with scarcely a passing thought. We have long since grown used to them and are not awed by their size, as newcomers are, or terrified by their powers, as sailors learn to be." I think he hit the nail on the head right off the bat. I think we do take the Great Lakes for granted, and we've been doing so for far too long.

Three out of every four people in our province get their drinking water from the Great Lakes. These waters are under constant threat: purple loosestrife, zebra

mussels, phragmites, Asian carp, blue-green algae—there's a never-ending cavalcade of threats to the Great Lakes. Some of them threaten our watersheds and shoreline green spaces, which are home to 4,000 species of plants, fish and wildlife.

1630

What's missing from the bill is a financial commitment of some magnitude. Speaker, I'll remind you that back in 2012, the Liberals said they would put \$52 million in the budget to protect and restore the Great Lakes. Well, they didn't follow through with that promise, and there's nothing in this bill that says those \$52 million will finally be coming from the passing of this act either. Protecting the Great Lakes is a real issue that requires serious money. As I've said already, we need real targets, real timelines and real results. We need coordinated efforts with our municipal partners and with our conservation authorities.

Make no mistake about it: The wetlands in the Great Lakes basin are in crisis. We have an urgent need to stop the loss and deterioration of the wetlands and shorelines.

To quote from the Great Lakes Protection Act Alliance, "Stronger wetland protection and restoration measures would substantially advance several priorities of the province, including: protecting species at risk and biodiversity, adapting to climate change, and safeguarding our water ... supply." And "Reversing wetland loss" will require both stronger protection of the remaining wetlands and rehabilitation or restoration of wetlands in areas that have suffered the greatest wetland loss and degradation, in order to ultimately increase the amount of wetland cover in Ontario."

The alliance to which I refer is made up of members representing the Canadian Environmental Law Association, Ecojustice, Environmental Defence, Ducks Unlimited Canada, Nature Canada, and the Sierra Club of Canada. I wish to thank the alliance for their interest and input in the ways this act could have been improved. They had some great ideas and emphasized the importance of setting actual, achievable targets, timelines, and action plans. Unfortunately, in my opinion, not enough of their ideas were incorporated into what we have before us today.

I started with a quotation from Pierre Berton's book *The Great Lakes*. In his introduction, he wrote of the unwelcome changes that have taken place since the days of the explorers—Samuel de Champlain, for example. Even the fish of today, for the most part, aren't the same as those taken for food hundreds of years ago—to quote from the book again, Speaker, "replaced in part by foreign exotics, many of them dumped in these waters from the bilges of the ocean steamers that can now traverse the entire system.

"A chemical stew, the by-product of industrial 'progress,' has transformed waters that once glittered crystal clear in the sunlight.

"And the great forests that once seemed endless and perpetual have disappeared. Even the stumps have vanished."

Speaker, this book was written nearly 20 years ago, and some would argue that there hasn't been a great deal of improvement in all of the lakes since then. That's why I see this bill as extremely important. We can't afford to miss this opportunity. We need to stand up and do our part so future generations won't be left with such a mess that they won't have the resources to correct the mistakes of the past.

The Liberal government had a chance in committee, when some very good suggestions were made on ways this legislation could be improved. However, although a few points were accepted, many more were rejected, which leaves the bill wanting in certain areas.

I appreciate that some ideas put forward by the NDP were incorporated into this proposed legislation. However, I am disappointed that there is no target established to protect wetlands. After all, the government has a policy of wetland protection but falls short on the legislation to do so.

I don't see anything in here, for example, that would make the companies which take more than 50,000 litres of water a day pay for the actual cost of regulating and enforcing this enterprise. The government takes in \$200,000 from the permits issued to 6,000 companies which use our water, but the cost—the actual cost—of monitoring and issuing the permits is \$9.5 million a year. This discrepancy was pointed out seven years ago by the Environmental Commissioner and it was highlighted in the Drummond report, yet there's nothing in here to fix that broken system.

Back to the book I've referenced by Pierre Berton. He wrote:

"The lakes provide and the lakes destroy. Some of the treasure torn from the rocks that ring the inland seas lies hidden beneath the waters, lost among the rubble of broken freighters. We have been profligate with our lakes.

"Shorelines have been filled in, cemented over, and ripped apart to form the cities that sprang up at the river mouths. For centuries the lakes have been the source of incalculable wealth from furs to hydro power; they sprawl today over the richest corner of the continent; but we are only now coming to understand we can no longer take them for granted.

"No wonder the first explorers thought of these lakes as oceans. Here was one-fifth of the world's fresh water, stored in a series of prehistoric basins.

"There is enough here to cover the surface of most of western Europe—to drown all of Germany, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and the three Benelux countries" of Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg.

Speaker, that's a lot of water, water that isn't as pristine as it used to be, water along our beaches that far too many times are closed and unfit for swimming and recreation because of pollution.

In my area in Canada's south, the 100-mile peninsula, the Pelee peninsula—some may say "south Detroit." Whatever you may wish to call it, we have a magnificent group of people working to preserve and protect our

portion of the Great Lakes. They work for the Essex Region Conservation Authority.

Speaker, as you know, there are 36 conservation authorities in Ontario, and all but one of them have watersheds that flow into the Great Lakes. That's why more attention is required on watershed management. Any runoff is pretty well going to end up in the Great Lakes at some point or another.

My conservation authority, ERCA, was created in 1973, back when our tree cover was abysmal. It was less than 3.5%. Dedicated staff and volunteers have held annual tree planting events since then. We have a natural cover now that's closer to 9%, but we still have a ways to go. We'd like to get it up around 12%, at least. It's hard work. ERCA has planted more than six million trees over the past 42 years.

I served on the board of the conservation authority for each of my seven years as a city councillor in Windsor. Chairing the board was one of my highlights and proudest moments as a councillor. I helped plant a lot of trees—I'll tell you that—but I also helped clean up our waterways, especially the Little River, which is a ward boundary on Windsor's east side. It's amazing what people throw away, the junk that ends up in our streams and rivers: car batteries, shopping carts, stolen bicycles, old tires, oil barrels, car seats, wheelbarrows, office chairs, bags of garbage, paint cans, shovels, rakes—you name it. This is the stuff we haul out of there on an annual basis. This is what our fish have to put up with, our frogs and snakes and birds and all of our other creatures, great and small.

1640

For years, some of our industries were dumping their waste down the drain or directly into the rivers and streams. Generations ago, the waste from outhouses made its way into nearby creeks. Today, overflow from faulty septic systems finds its way into the streams which run into the Great Lakes.

Rain will sometimes flush fields and carry fertilizers and other chemicals into our watersheds. Nutrient levels that are elevated, warmer weather, less winter ice cover and warmer water temperatures: These are among the factors which lead to algae blooms on the Great Lakes. You'll recall that the city of Toledo told residents not to drink water from their taps for four days last year. The algae had poisoned their water. On Pelee Island, my friend Mayor Rick Masse instituted a ban that covered 90% of the residents who draw their water from wells because of the blue-green algae as well, and that ban lasted 10 days.

We have more people living next to the water these days and more people who want to change the rules and regulations so they can live closer to the water. Speaker, I know you're a big Joni Mitchell fan. Remember the Big Yellow Taxi song about paving paradise and putting up a parking lot? Well, oil and gasoline and road salts: They'll run off from those asphalt lots, and they're also ending up in our waterways and making their way into the Great Lakes, as well.

The challenges facing us are great. Back to Pierre Berton for a moment again: "Erie is my favourite lake because of the three long spits that stretch like fingers into the waters. Rondeau, Long Point and Pelee are paradises for us birders who make our pilgrimage to the lake each May, hoping to spot a rare little gull along the beach or a tufted titmouse in the Carolinian forest.

"As for Ontario, I live not far from its shores and still remember with gratitude when in sultry summers we escaped the heat by taking the ferry to Toronto island or the excursion steamer to the mouth of the Niagara. The island—really islands—is still there, much improved, but the cruise ships, alas, are long gone."

When I first moved to southwestern Ontario in 1974, I lived in Leamington for a year before moving into Windsor. I spent a lot of time at Point Pelee National Park. I remember the annual smelt runs they used to have there. The smelt are gone from the point for the most part now.

When we discuss the importance of this bill, Bill 66, no discussion is complete without reference to the importance of the commercial fishing industry on Lake Erie. Its economic impact is worth more than \$244 million. Lake Erie is home to the world's largest freshwater commercial fishing industry. Erie, the smallest of the lakes, the shallowest Great Lake, is a lot healthier these days than it used to be. The fishing boats and the fish-processing industry employ more than 900 people directly and another 600 in indirect spinoff jobs. They bring in an estimated tax revenue to the government of more than \$20 million a year. The lake has to be healthy; it has to remain healthy in order to sustain the commercial fishing industry.

Down the road in Elgin county, the quota for yellow perch was cut by about 20% this year, while in Chatham-Kent and Essex county, the quota for pickerel is still more than four million fish a year. That's an international quota for both sides of the border and includes the pickerel caught by any of us with a line and a lure, especially the member from Essex, who's out there on a regular basis.

When we speak about the need to improve the quality of the Great Lakes, we need to understand that some of the food that ends up on our table comes out of the lakes: smelt, perch, pickerel, bass, salmon, trout. Speaker, the men and women who work in the commercial fishing industry in Lake Erie log long hours, sometimes in nasty weather. They don't get a lot of attention but we need their labour, we appreciate their hard work, and we enjoy the harvest that they bring to our tables.

Let me set aside Lake Erie for a moment and return to Pierre Berton, who refers to the Great Lakes as a gigantic staircase whose top step is Superior, a body of water so vast that its volume is greater than all of the other lakes put together, with enough water left over to fill three additional Eries. "Superior tumbles into Huron, the second step in the stairs, by a 21-foot drop, most of it concentrated on a single wild one-mile stretch of the St. Marys River. Georgian Bay is separated from the main

lake by the spiny ridge of the Bruce Peninsula, which plunges briefly underwater to emerge as Manitoulin Island.

"Some have called Georgian Bay the sixth Great Lake, but hydrologically it, Lake Michigan and Huron are a single body of water. There is no drop to separate them; no canal, no locks are needed. The straits of Mackinac, which connect Michigan and Huron, are just that—straits, not a river.

"A mere eight feet below Michigan-Huron lies shallow little Erie, connected to the upper lakes by the St. Clair and Detroit Rivers and Lake St. Clair. The drop is so gentle that no man-made ditch or lock is needed here.

"But, Lake Ontario, at the base of the Niagara Escarpment, is 360 feet below Erie, cut off from its sister by the cataract of Niagara.

"In early times," Mr. Berton says, "such an impediment meant hours of back-breaking portages. It is easy to see why the early traders preferred to skirt this obstacle and go up the Ottawa and down to Georgian Bay by way of Lake Nipissing and the French River.

"Now a series of locks at the Soo, across the Niagara Peninsula, and along the St. Lawrence has connected all five lakes, making it easy for ocean-going vessels to travel all the way from Liverpool to Duluth."

Speaker, I know the minister holds the Great Lakes in high esteem. I appreciate his dedication to this bill. I would hope that at some point he can use his pervasive skills to convince the Premier and cabinet colleagues to find the money that is so badly needed to pay for the improvements outlined in Bill 66.

The minister spoke today about the plastic micro-beads. We also have to be concerned about the threats that could be out there from fracking for natural gas if that ever happens in Ontario. The minister spoke also about the pharmaceuticals, about the stronger pesticides that are getting into the lakes, and about the dangers of Asian carp.

By coincidence, as you know, today was Great Lakes Day here at Queen's Park. Mayors from around the province and from nearby states were here talking to us about how they value the Great Lakes, as part of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative. Friends of mine were here: the mayor of Thunder Bay, Keith Hobbs; Randy Hope, who, as you know, is the mayor of Chatham-Kent; John Paterson from Leamington; Nelson Santos and deputy Gord Queen from Kingsville, all here promoting the Great Lakes today.

The minister earlier read a poem by Smoky Hoss. I'd like to now give you some song lyrics from a Great Lakes troubadour by the name of Pat Dailey. No, I'm not going to sing, Speaker. If I could, I would, but I can't. I can play the radio, and that's about all I can play.

I really recommend anyone in the House today to google Pat Dailey and the Great Lakes Song, because this is really—not in the House. The member for Beaches—East York knows that his phone is taken away if he uses it in the House, but if you google this when you are back in your office—

Interjection.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Dailey. D-A-I-L-E-Y. Pat Dailey, the Great Lakes Song. It goes like this:

The Great Lakes are a diamond on the hand of North America,

brightly shining jewel on the friendship border-ring,
freshwater highway, comin' down from Canada,
all around the shoreline, you can hear them sing,

Sweet mother Michigan, Father Superior,
comin' down from Mackinac and Sault Ste. Marie.
Blue water Huron flows down to lake Erie-o,
falls to Ontario, then run on out to sea.

1650

Speaker, I can't sing. That's the first verse of the song. I'm not going to sing any more, but I will say some of the other lines in there:

Hardy are the seamen on the ships that load the iron ore,
sailing out of Thunder Bay and bound for Buffalo.
Hardy are the fishermen, just like their fathers were before.

They say they'll bury me at sea, come my time to go.

Oh the tales the sailors spin of mermaids singing in the wind,
the sinking of the Bessemer, the drowning of the crew.
Memories of waters crossed, of women won and fortunes lost
are etched upon their faces and faded old tattoos.

Down below the quarterdecks, the old men mend the fishing nets and
up above the windy bridge, young men curse into the wind.

All along the winds of straits, the wives and mothers lie awake and
pray our Lady of the Lake to send them home again.

Speaker, I really hope that all members of the House will think again about their support for this bill. It's not perfect. Not very much of the legislation that we deal with in this House is perfect in any way, but this comes close, because it puts a little bit in there that will help us improve the Great Lakes—not a lot; there's no money in there, and they don't do enough for wetlands. But it's a beginning, and we have to encourage the government to keep going in this direction. We have to improve the Great Lakes. This is an opportunity. We can't let it go by. Future generations are counting on us, and I hope our friends in the PC caucus, the official opposition, will see their way fit to give this one a nudge, maybe improve it, next time it's out there.

Thank you for your time this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'd like to thank the member from Windsor—Tecumseh. It's a good

thing he wasn't singing; I might have had to call him out of order.

Further debate?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: It's a great pleasure to rise today and continue debate on the third reading of Bill 66, the proposed new Great Lakes Protection Act. Our government has been working for some time to develop legislation to protect and restore the Great Lakes. I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the bill, on both sides of the House, as well as our partners throughout the province.

The member from Huron–Bruce, during the debate, said in her comments that enough conservation was not done. I appreciate the member's dedication towards her community, but I don't agree with her comments.

This is the third version of the bill that our government has brought forward. Each time, it is improved and strengthened. We have received many positive and valuable comments on the bill, including from the Environmental Registry.

It's clear that many people care deeply and passionately about their lakes. As the member from Windsor–Tecumseh said, it's an important piece of legislation. It's extremely important, and it must be passed. He's right.

Healthy Great Lakes are vital to the success of our province: 98% of Ontarians live within the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River, and 80% of Ontarians get their drinking water from the Great Lakes. The Great Lakes contain one fifth of the world's fresh water. The Great Lakes regional economy is the third largest in the world. Ontario's Great Lakes basin is home to 40% of Canada's economic activity and 95% of Ontario's agricultural land. The basin supports a wide array of plants and animals, and a rich ecosystem that is unique in the world. The Great Lakes power our homes and factories, irrigate our farms and help transport our goods to market. They are a vital resource for our tourism economy. They are truly an envy of the world, where fresh water is in an ever-diminishing supply.

We must act to protect the Great Lakes where they are in decline, restore them to good health and ensure that the water is drinkable, swimmable and fishable for future generations to come.

As our minister said, the Great Lakes are under increasing stress from harmful pollution, excess levels of nutrients, urban growth, invasive species and loss of natural habitats such as wetlands.

Climate change is also challenging the ability of our Great Lakes. For example, heavy downpours are now twice as common as they were a century ago. This trend is expected to get worse. It will further cause problems such as flooding, erosion, pollution and runoff into the Great Lakes.

Our minister said that excessive levels of nutrients have re-emerged, which is further causing large-scale algal blooms. That can affect our drinking water quality.

During the standing committee, a number of deputations appeared and spoke about this. One of them was the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment.

They said, during their committee presentation, "As Walkerton reminded us, water supplies can be contaminated, with deadly consequences...." So it's very, very important that we take care of drinking water quality that can be toxic to fish, wildlife, and people.

Scientists warn us that the Great Lakes are at a tipping point. If we do not act now, it will be very hard to make changes. That is why we are proposing the Great Lakes Protection Act. This act, if passed, would strengthen the ability to restore and protect the lakes. It would help us to protect and restore the ecological health of the Great Lakes while creating opportunities for the public to become involved in their protection and restoration.

This is the third time, as I said earlier, that the Great Lakes Protection Act has been proposed to the Legislature.

I also want to thank all those who have participated and brought their ideas, concerns and passion for the Great Lakes to our discussion. Because of those comments from concerned Ontarians, we have an even stronger proposal. The proposed act is the product of extensive engagement. It was posted on the Environmental Registry three times. We also held listening sessions, stakeholder workshops, focused meetings, and First Nations and Métis engagement sessions, and public hearings were conducted.

The bill was further strengthened in the standing committee as a result of public hearings and debate. In those hearings, we heard strong support from medical practitioners—including nurses and physicians—environmental organizations, conservation authorities, municipalities, industry and cottagers.

We also heard areas where the bill could further be improved, and we listened. The strengthened act puts emphasis on addressing significant environmental challenges, such as algal blooms, protecting wetlands and watersheds, and reducing nutrients and harmful pollutants.

It would ensure that monitoring and reporting of ecological conditions in the Great Lakes–St. Lawrence River basin is established and maintained. This also includes monitoring of harmful pollutants, water quality, the impact of climate change, water quantity and biological communities—all critical to the health of the Great Lakes.

It also highlights the need to monitor and report on microplastics, like microbeads. This reflects the work done by my colleague MPP Lalonde in her private member's bill.

1700

The strengthened act now emphasizes the important principles of collaborating with partners, including ministries, municipalities and conservation authorities, through the sharing of data.

The proposed act also requires progress reports on Ontario's Great Lakes Strategy to be tabled every three years in the Legislature. This will ensure transparency and accountability. The timelines for our reporting and review of the strategy cannot be extended.

In addition, there are several measures contained in the act to reflect First Nations and Métis interests, including the conservation of traditional ecological knowledge, when offered. Mr. Speaker, as we all know, the First Nations maintain a spiritual and cultural relationship with water. We value the unique perspective of the First Nations and Métis communities.

However, there is no one-size-fits-all solution to the challenges we are facing. Each of the lakes is unique and has its own special considerations and requirements. This proposed act would help us address the worst issues facing different parts of the lakes. The bill would establish a Great Lakes Guardians' Council.

The member from Huron—Bruce said in her comments that it will not be enough, that this will be a small group of people who will be making decisions, which is not true. That's wrong, Mr. Speaker. The council would be made up of ministries, municipalities, First Nations and Métis communities; and there will be representatives from farming communities, conservation authorities, industry, environmental groups, the recreation and tourism sectors, and the science community. All will be included. There will be a wide range of groups on the council. The council would provide a collaborative forum for discussing Great Lakes issues and priorities. As we know, no man is an island, and we always benefit from the ideas and advice of others; that's why our government has created a guardians' council.

Based on the comments we heard from the stakeholders and the public, we have now made it clear that the Great Lakes Guardians' Council could meet on a lake-by-lake or watershed basis. The council would identify priority projects and potential funding sources.

The proposed act would also allow the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change to work with the Great Lakes ministries, communities and partners to set specific or general targets for local and lake-wide areas. It would require the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change to set at least one target within two years to reduce algal blooms. Targets would be developed based on science and through collaboration and consultation, and they would be accompanied by action plans.

Mr. Speaker, I was reading a newspaper in the month of June—the *Globe and Mail*—and it was said, “Urgent Action Needed to Tackle Pollution in Great Lakes.” When the Pope visited the US a week ago, even he made the call that it is about time to talk about climate change.

I am very proud of our government. Since 2003, our government has taken strong action on green initiatives. Our former Premier, Dalton McGuinty, received the Sierra Club Distinguished Service Award from North America's largest environmental organization, and the interim executive director of Sierra Club Canada said, “We honour those who despite significant challenges make the right decisions for our environment. Premier McGuinty persevered in the face of strong dissenting forces to close power plants and create a green power industry in Ontario. No other government ... in North America has made a greater contribution to fighting climate change.”

Our current Premier, the Honourable Kathleen Wynne, was also honoured for her leadership on climate issues at an event on Toronto Island last week, it was reported in the *Toronto Star* on September 27, 2015. Mr. Speaker, this is a demonstration of incredible leadership on the part of our government.

The messages from the stakeholders are very clear: We cannot wait. We need to take strong, concerted, collaborative action now. Our future and our families' futures depend on healthy Great Lakes and their ecosystems.

We all have a stake in the success of our province. Our success is deeply intertwined in the health of our Great Lakes. Ontarians have shown they care passionately about the lakes. Let's channel that shared love of the Great Lakes to work together to pass this bill, one that all of us can look back on as a gift to our children and grandchildren.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: Bill 66, An Act to protect and restore the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin—the Great Lakes Protection Act, 2015: The bill summary states that the purpose of the bill is “to protect and restore the ecological health of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin” and “to create opportunities for individuals and communities to become involved in the protection and restoration of the ecological health of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin.”

I live in the Great Lakes community. My riding is surrounded by the Great Lakes. My friends and my family are all surrounded by the Great Lakes. We all get our water from the Great Lakes. I believe it's vital to support the health of the Great Lakes. This is a no-brainer. Anyone who even remotely tries to suggest that I'm not a champion of the health of the Great Lakes is unequivocally wrong. I don't, however, support the manner in which the government is doing this bill. I fear how the government is exploiting an important issue for photo ops and spin environmentalism. I believe it was Bill 100—the next incarnation was Bill 6, and in that case, the Liberal government actually issued a press release in my riding suggesting that I was not supportive of the Great Lakes' health. It's disingenuous, it's untrue and, frankly, it's ludicrous. Who in our great province is not supportive of the health of the Great Lakes?

I'm concerned about the government further stripping local autonomy, bringing in more red tape, not defining a funding model to make this work and dismissing rural landowners, farmers, cottagers, businesses—especially the marine industry—and individuals who have an interest in the long-term health of our Great Lakes.

Last year, I was involved with the Stop the Drop campaign—Colin Dobell was the leader of that initiative—during the severely low water levels in the Great Lakes communities. The falling water levels were hurting local businesses and tourism in Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, across the Great Lakes and across our great province.

The Chi-Cheemaun, the “big canoe” ferry, was delayed due to the declining water levels and the lack of

dredging of the bays. I and the member from Algoma-Manitowlin worked very hard to ensure that, again, that ferry was able to go out, despite the declining water levels. Of course, we had concerns. That has huge ramifications for all kinds of things in both of our communities. At that time, 44 communities met with my caucus, the PC caucus, to talk about the impact of declining water levels on businesses and livelihoods.

There is a lot of ongoing effort to protect our lakes, and a lot of concern has been raised about what is in this bill. I'm disappointed to see the Liberals failed to seriously consider the six key issues that we, the PC caucus, highlighted in the current bill. We introduced them as amendments, but none of the six key amendments were actually accepted. I have serious concerns. If they're truly willing to work together, to collaborate, why would they not accept one of those six? We would have hoped they would have accepted all six, because we believe they all had pertinent value to make this better legislation.

It's clear they had no intention of listening to the concerns raised by my PC colleagues, as they also time-allocated the bill and only passed one of the 31 motions put forth during committee. The only PC motion passed supported the sharing of data between the ministries responsible for protecting the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin. That should have been, again, a no-brainer. It shouldn't even have had to have an amendment. You would have thought that would have been in the legislation from day one.

1710

The Great Lakes are a joint responsibility between Canada and the United States, and as such, we should be endeavoring to work alongside our southern neighbours rather than unilaterally passing toothless legislation.

I should also note at this point, Mr. Speaker, that my federal counterpart and friend MP Larry Miller introduced and had a PMB passed last year, I believe, in the House of Commons, relating to taking of water from the Great Lakes.

So, again, there are lots of good initiatives that are actually making a difference, and I'm proud to be able to stand in support of those.

We have a proud history of marine heritage. In Bruce county, the museum has a great display of the history of our marine heritage that I welcome everyone to come and see and be part of. In Bruce Peninsula, the Wiarton Propeller Club—many, many people, our forefathers, all worked on the Great Lakes. It was a huge, thriving industry.

Currently, today, at Georgian College, the marine emergency duties program and the simulator are key components of the marine industry and certainly play an absolutely critical role in the ongoing success of our community.

Tourism: We have harbours in Meaford, Owen Sound, Big Bay, Wiarton, Lion's Head, Tobermory, Stokes Bay, Red Bay, Oliphant, Sauble Beach, all the way down the coastline to Southampton, Port Elgin, Kincardine and Goderich.

It is a source of our fresh water, so how would anyone suggest that I'm not supportive of legislation that truly is going to protect those Great Lakes?

I do have some challenges, Madam Speaker. Welcome.

Issue number 1: We have a concern about stripping local autonomy. I'm going to relate a little bit here, that we have already seen the devastation that the loss of local autonomy can have on our local communities. The Green Energy Act stripped local decision-making and littered our rural landscapes with unwanted industrial wind farms. It's unacceptable. We hear that continually. In the four years I've been here, I continually hear that from municipalities and the people who elected those local municipal officials. The people of Ontario did not give this government a mandate to remove local decision-making processes and replace them with further red tape.

The geographically focused initiatives, GFIs, passed as a result of this bill will also have the ability to override existing official plans and zoning bylaws in communities across Ontario. The community will be directed by hand-picked and appointed—not elected—people, a guardians' council, with no ability to have input. It could have huge financial implications. That guardians' council could come along to a municipality in my riding and say, "Here's a \$500,000 directive. You will do that and you will do it in the next six months," and that community has no ability to even have a say in that.

Most of our municipalities are struggling. They're all struggling with their financial abilities to keep up with everything. This could be another one that they have no ability—the stakeholder implications; the landowners who, again, will be told, "This will happen on your property," with no input. Most of them are farmers that border those. They want the stewardship to ensure that that land is always going to be there. Who as a farmer is not going to protect their children and grandchildren to the best of their ability? But they need input. They need the ability to be at the table.

The Queen's Park bureaucracy knows best. Half of them have probably never even been out to an area like rural Ontario, like my riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, and yet they could be something from someone who thinks maybe, perhaps in the best interests it's good—but have never consulted locally and know or respect or appreciate the ramifications of what that could be.

The guardians' council and the red tape that could be created: The current wording regarding the guardians' council only confirms that the minister will sit as the council chair and be joined by those people he or she considers advisable. This will limit the opportunity for public participation, as a hand-selected Liberal council provides no assurance that all relevant stakeholder interests will be represented. Again, I want to remind that they're appointed, hand-picked, hand-chosen, not elected like I am, and yet have I no say in that legislation once it moves forward. This is just another example of the Liberal appetite for bloated bureaucracy and burdensome red tape.

No funding model: It is seriously concerning to see a piece of legislation appear before this House for a third time which still fails to address our parties' concerns over how programs under its mandate will be funded. It should be fully costed, including the value for money invested, and the benefit of that investment and effort. If they think this is so good, why would they not be able to attach what the ramifications, what the dollar values are going to be, and what their intent and their plans are? The bill emphasizes the scope and power of new GFIs yet fails to explain who exactly will be left holding the bill. The taxpayer once again will be that person. At a time when Ontario's fiscal state is in such despair as a result of waste, overspending and mismanagement by the 12-year tenure of this Liberal government, Ontario cannot afford to write blank cheques regarding any initiative.

No industrial wind turbines, issue number 4: In order to protect the natural beauty, fish habitats and the tourism industry, the government must not allow the construction of industrial wind turbines in the Great Lakes. We do not know how building offshore wind projects in fresh water would affect the fragile lakeshore ecosystem, and Ontario does not need more intermittent and expensive power generation. On land, we still have concerns; why would we go out into our Great Lakes without knowing what harm could be done?

Issue number five: no respect for landowners. Once again, the Liberals are trying to sneak through sections of a bill that will allow for warrantless entry onto private property. Not only is such a provision concerning to landowners in general; in the case of farmers, it can be downright dangerous to have uninvited guests wandering their property.

Issue number six: The rural lens, as developed by ROMA, outlines 12 points that should be assessed when passing any legislation. From a rural lens perspective, Ontario doesn't need another layer of bureaucracy to tell local decision-makers how to run their communities. What the province needs is for the Liberal government to honour its current agreements and adequately fund and staff programs and listen to local stakeholders. The Premier claims to be an adamant supporter of the rural lens; she should use this opportunity to prove it.

I stand here proudly to suggest to you that I am a champion of the Great Lakes. My family, my friends all live on the Great Lakes. I am not going to do anything that would undermine their health, but I want legislation that truly is going to make a difference, that truly is going to provide a positive impact, and not just legislation that is only there in writing, with no real reality of what it's going to do, good or bad. At the end of the day, I believe that the Liberal government should listen to all of this input and not proceed without having a final, comprehensive consultation with all stakeholders and the Legislature.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Kathryn McGarry): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: As always, it's an honour to be able to rise in this House, and today to speak on Bill 66,

An Act to protect and restore the Great Lakes-St Lawrence River Basin. We've heard a lot today about people who live close to the Great Lakes, and that's a good thing. But this act covers the whole drainage basin, and that goes right up to the great riding of Timiskaming-Cochrane, where we have the Arctic watershed. Everything that goes south from the Arctic watershed ends up in the Great Lakes basin. That is millions of acres and thousands of farms.

Farmers want to protect the environment. Farmers are one of the great stewards of the environment. The OFA is actually here today, and they've raised some concerns with this bill. We support this bill. It's a good start. But we need more than words and promise of new regulations and promise of new monitoring programs and even a promise of a new council, the guardians' council. They're all nice words. If you really want to improve the quality of the Great Lakes, which is all our goal—it's a goal for our current generation; it's a goal for our children; it's a legacy we need to leave our children—we need more than words in Toronto. All the partners who live around the Great Lakes and in the Great Lakes basin all have those goals, but they need more than words. They need actual programs. They need a partner in the government.

It's happened before. We've had programs in the farm community where we partnered with the Ministry of Natural Resources to plant trees in places that eroded easily. Those programs existed. When I was a farmer, I participated in those programs. I actually worked with the MNR and we planted trees on acres and acres of erodible property. We did our part, and it was because we wanted to do our part.

Just making regulations or creating new groups of people to talk about the issues isn't going to solve the problems we want to solve. We had a meeting today with the Great Lakes mayors and they brought up issues. One of them explained how farmers in his region were helping. Farmers want to help—and not just farmers; all the people in this province who are in the Great Lakes basin want to improve the environment. But they need more than words from government; they need a partner.

Often, this government is good at making bills that sound like they're going to do something, like this bill, An Act to protect and restore the Great Lakes-St Lawrence River Basin. If you really read this act, there's not one physical thing that's actually going to protect the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin in this act. Is there potential? Yes. That's why we're voting in favour. But is there one thing in this bill that is actually going to save one part of the Great Lakes? No, and that's something that hopefully this government will recognize and actually work together on with the stakeholders.

1720

This government doesn't have a very good history of working with stakeholders, particularly in agriculture. If you look at the recent issue with neonicotinoid pesticides, the farm community wants to work with the government. The government has the ability to make a law. That's a

majority government; that's their right. But they also have the duty to make sure that the regulations they impose actually work in the area where they're supposed to work: in the field. When you see a big segment of agriculture actually have to take the government to court to try and slow down the regulation so they can actually make it work, that's an example of a government that just wants to have a good press release to impress some of their stakeholders, but doesn't actually take the time to make sure that the regulations are actually going to work.

They have to take heed with this act as well. Take the time. We didn't take the time in the House because this was a program motion and it was rushed through. But I implore this government to take the time and actually work with the stakeholders to come up with programs that will actually physically reach the goals of protecting the Great Lakes, of which we are all so proud.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Kathryn McGarry): Further debate?

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'm pleased to stand to speak on Bill 66, the proposed Great Lakes Protection Act, which all of my colleagues have been speaking very positively about today.

Over the last three years, the public has been invited to comment through the Environmental Bill of Rights, and that's totalled over 40 meetings with stakeholders being held across the province. We've revised this bill on feedback from the consultations and the motions presented by parties on previous versions.

New challenges are overwhelming old solutions. That is why we need new initiatives to help the Great Lakes. The proposed Great Lakes Protection Act is designed to give new tools to restore and protect our Great Lakes so they are drinkable, swimmable and fishable. Our Great Lakes provide more than 80% of the drinking water, and that's important to the people of Ontario not only for our economic prosperity but for our health. Over 95% of Ontario's agricultural land is in the Great Lakes basin.

What does the proposed act fill? We're fortunate in Ontario to have leading legislation that covers specific areas, such as drinking water testing, for example. However, we do not have a comprehensive set of tools to address the combined stresses on the Great Lakes at a regional level, so we've got a lot more work to do.

In our listening sessions, we heard the need for more comprehensive approaches. The bill allows for local groups, the province and others to work towards comprehensive solutions for a specific area. That's some of the good words my previous speaker was issuing.

We've also heard that we're going to bring players together for a coordinated and focused action, and so the bill creates the Great Lakes Guardians' Council. We've also heard the need for targets and regular reporting, so the bill allows for the development of these targets and regular reporting.

Ladies and gentlemen, this past week at the general government meeting we listened to a number of great speakers. One gentleman from Greenpeace agreed with one of my queries on what we have in the Ministry of the

Environment and Climate Change—and I might mention that there were two American guests in the audience that day as well. I asked the question on the very special status of Minister Glen Murray and, of course, past minister Jim Bradley. There was no hesitation; everyone acknowledged the fact that these environmental leaders that you and I know rely on their records just to show some of the many things they've accomplished to date, and they continue to do that.

There are five bodies of water—including the St. Lawrence River and, of course, excluding Lake Michigan, which is all on the American side—and eight either state or provincial boundaries that combine the area that forms Bill 66.

Why are the Great Lakes important to us?

I should preface that by saying I'm very, very hopeful that we will get the consideration of traditional ecological knowledge, if it's offered by First Nations or Métis communities.

Ontario is a leader on Bill 66, which is for the entire Great Lakes basin. It's home to most of Ontario's drinking water, 98% of Ontarians, 95% of agricultural lands, 80% of our power and 75% of Canada's manufacturing. There are over 10,000 kilometres of Great Lakes and St. Lawrence shoreline, which is the longest freshwater coastline in the world; more than the eight Great Lakes states combined.

Do these new tools help the goals of Ontario's Great Lakes Strategy and the 2014 Canada-Ontario agreement, such as the ability to establish targets and develop geographically focused initiatives? Well, there's some good news. One clear way to strengthen protection on the Great Lakes is by setting targets. The act would allow the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, in consultation with other Great Lakes ministers, communities and stakeholders, to set specific or general targets for local and lake-wide areas and to develop action plans to meet those targets. For example, the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change would set at least one target within two years to support the reduction of algae blooms, based on the best available science and consultation, consistent with binational efforts.

I have to mention that when I say that, I think of Lake Erie. That's perhaps somewhere that could be started. It's probably the body that needs the greatest attention the quickest.

The municipality of Ajax did one of the presentations, and they focused on their shoreline with excessive algae growth. They have a very dedicated volunteer PACT POW group. They're challenging the regions of Durham and York's sanitary line extension because of the algae growth along the shoreline on Lake Ontario. Ajax is, from boundary to boundary, from Pickering to Whitby, so it's a pretty extensive area. There were excessive bump-ups registered with the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change, and they are being reviewed.

I could list a whole bunch of other things, but because that lady gave me the slip, I won't. I'll just make it a little shorter.

I would close in saying that I asked several of the speakers the other day if they have paid attention yet to Pope Francis's papal encyclical, which is now being used as a cornerstone of most world leaders. That is appropriate. It is something special. When I was there a week ago, there was a special speaker from the United Nations speaking to about a quarter of a million people, agreeing with the papal encyclical. It, like Bill 66—both of them are great; both of them are needed for expansion.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to have a few minutes to make a few comments about Bill 66.

I think one of the things that struck me when I started looking at the details of the bill and some of the submissions that have been received—it reminded me that Elizabeth Gwillim, the wife of the first Lieutenant Governor, John Graves Simcoe, wrote in her diary about the loons on Lake Ontario, and I tried to imagine what the Great Lakes would have looked like when loons had enough area to nest and travel around.

1730

Instead, I am looking at a submission in the EBR, which, again, I think expresses a concern that people share:

"The Great Lakes are an essential part of Ontario's natural environment and a critical resource, especially for people who live, work, and play within their watershed. In the face of industrial discharges, invasive species, and the pressures of population growth and development, strong action is needed to protect and restore the ecological health of the Great Lakes for the present generation and for future generations. There are many benefits of promoting environmentally sustainable land and water uses, activities and development practices in the Ontario portion of the Great Lakes watershed. Public bodies, aboriginal communities, businesses and individuals share an interest in the ecosystem of the Great Lakes and have shared responsibility for their health.

"The act should protect, improve or restore the elements that contribute to the ecological health of the Great Lakes...."

But when I look at some parts of this bill, I'm struck by the challenge that faces us in this particular piece of legislation. By that I'm talking about the fact that we all recognize there's the complexity of the ecology, whether we're looking at lands that are agriculture, lands that are towns and cities themselves, forests and wetlands. But more importantly, I think the challenge lies in what has happened with the political overlap and the jurisdiction of the Great Lakes area. So I looked back and I found, for instance, some examples of the regulations that exist that Bill 66 could conflict with: the Clean Water Act, the Environmental Protection Act, the Nutrient Management Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act, the water opportunities act and the Water Resources Act.

If that isn't enough, there's more: the Planning Act, the Conservation Authorities Act, the Condominium Act,

the Greenbelt Act, the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act, the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, the Places to Grow Act and the Lake Simcoe Protection Act.

These give us an idea of the complexity of what is laid over the jurisdiction of the Great Lakes. That, then, has to be included, because there are the international pieces of legislation and bodies that have authority over the Great Lakes: the International Joint Commission, Great Lakes Water Quality Board and Great Lakes Executive Committee, to name a few.

I think you can appreciate, when you start looking at that, that one of the major obstacles to being able to go back to the introduction of what we're trying to succeed with here, with the oversight of the Great Lakes, is the complexity, all the legislation. This bill provides more. It provides us with the Great Lakes Guardians' Council. So this act would then establish yet another advisory body, and the bill gives it the right to look at identifying priorities, sources of funding and areas in need of remediation, as well as to advise the minister on setting targets, establishing interjurisdictional agreements and approving proposals and initiatives.

So you can see, again, that there's more language, there are more rules, there's more red tape, there's more of all of these things that have not much to do directly with some of the problems that the Great Lakes face, like carp and phragmites and various other invasive species.

This bill, as it stands, does not meet the test that we see as important. When you're looking at the issue around local autonomy, visions of the Green Energy Act come to mind, where the ability of the local community to have any part in the decision-making was eliminated, and you see the landscape with unwanted industrial wind farms, just as one particular example. As well, when you look at all of the groups that I listed and their legislative functions, you can see, again, the voice of a local committee, a local group of landowners making processes and making it difficult for them with further red tape. The geographically focused initiatives, which have passed as a result of this bill, will also have the ability to override existing official plans and zoning bylaws in communities across the province.

When we look at this and look at some of the volume of rules and regulations, of boards and bodies and assemblies and groups that all have some say, potentially, in what happens, but then at the top of that is actually the minister who will be responsible for creating the guardians' council—so with this kind of pyramid of authority, it's hard to imagine that this bill will actually translate into some action. I think of what I've seen in my community with something as uncomplicated—and I mean that in a charitable way—as the local conservation authority, and we get out once a year and help put in trees and various other projects. While that might seem not very exciting, at the same time it's very crucial for protection against stream erosion and the ability of water to move slowly enough to actually have that wetland-sink effect that is key to the importance of wetlands.

So I point out the morass of rules and people and groups, as I mentioned, and at the same time there's no clear, set indication of funding. Obviously all of these organizations and rules will have to be fed through funding. This will mean that the bill, even without the funding, is obviously not going to be able to provide the kind of concern that I suggested came from the EBR in that: What does the lake need? Well, it needs an understanding of the shared responsibility for the health of the Great Lakes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It is really an honour to join this debate on Bill 66, the Great Lakes Protection Act.

I have been giving some thought to the Great Lakes today, knowing that mayors from the Great Lakes region were among us to discuss the issue. We had the pleasure of meeting with them this afternoon to talk about some of the issues: invasive species, Asian carp, phragmites and global climate change, in and of itself. They have many concerns, all valid, and all with a concerned focus to work together to try to address those concerns—also, of course, asking for our help at the provincial level.

It was top of mind for me today. As I was thinking about it, I thought about my connection to the Great Lakes, specifically Lake St. Clair, in Belle River, where I grew up, and now I have the great fortune of living on Lake St. Clair. My wife and I and our family built a house on Lake St. Clair this year, so now when we wake up, when I am at home, I get to look out to that beautiful, vast expanse of water and to feel some of the things that the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change spoke about when he referenced the poem—just the enormity of it, almost the infinity of it. Knowing the content of this bill and understanding its ramifications, purpose and intent, I wonder if, indeed, we've missed the mark. Even in the title, it is a little bit of a misnomer: the Great Lakes Protection Act.

1740

The Great Lakes will always protect themselves. Long after we are gone, the Great Lakes will rejuvenate. They will be fresh again.

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Think about it. It's not the Great Lakes that we're protecting; it's us as a species. It's humanity. It is our viability as human beings and our ability to live in health and prosperity, the prosperity that those bodies of water have brought us, generation after generation.

Yes, the focus is protecting of the Great Lakes, but we should remind ourselves, as we do when we seek serenity, as we do when we seek peace and seek somewhere to focus—we are drawn to the water because it offers us that. Again, it's remarkable, majestic—the fortune we have to live around it and the abundance that it brings. But our responsibility, our contract, should be to do everything we can to protect the generations to come to be able to experience that. Again, the Great Lakes will ultimately, through time, renew itself, and the environ-

ment will, long after the human species is gone. Our challenge is to acknowledge that it is our responsibility to do everything we can.

This bill certainly has some good intent. I will support it, as will the rest of my caucus, but there's so much more that we can do and so much more that we must do, not only to ensure that the Great Lakes are there but that our species is able to be there to enjoy it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'm pleased to rise today and speak to Bill 66, the Great Lakes Protection Act.

This legislation acknowledges the vital role that the Great Lakes play in Ontario's environment, economy and the health of our citizens. My constituents in Halton know well the importance of protecting the environment, not just for today but for future generations. Halton is filled with beautiful, natural landscapes, farmland and waterways that are woven into the social and economic fabric of our region. Keeping Halton clean, green and beautiful and keeping Ontario clean, green and beautiful is a priority for municipal, regional and provincial leaders. I'm pleased to see that that spirit of passionate and responsible environmentalism lives in this bill.

We have a responsibility to protect the environmental integrity of our province for us, our children and our children's children. And while the health of the Great Lakes has improved in recent years, the overall health of three of Ontario's four Great Lakes is declining due to a number of modern threats: pressures arising from urban growth, changing climate, invasive species, toxic chemicals, loss of natural environments like wetlands—the list goes on and on. These are just some of the factors that threaten the health of our Great Lakes, and we must do more to protect them. So I disagree with the member opposite who felt that the Great Lakes will protect themselves. I disagree. I think our Great Lakes need our help right here in this province, and that's what we're here to do.

Our Great Lakes play a significant role in Ontario. They are an invaluable resource that impacts our economy, environment and the well-being of all of us—all Ontarians. Close to 75% of Canada's manufacturing, 80% of Ontario's power generation and 95% of Ontario's agricultural lands depend on the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin.

From an ecological standpoint, the lakes are home to rich array of plants, animals and ecosystems, and they are the foundation of Ontario's strength and success. We must protect our Great Lakes to protect our future.

There is no current comprehensive legislation that provides clear direction and requirements to protect the lakes. Considering the lake's importance to the very foundation of our province's health and prosperity, that needs to change. That's why this bill is so important.

Simply put, Mr. Speaker, this proposed act will build on this province's strong history when it comes to protecting the environment today and for future generations. It will fight climate change, reduce algal blooms, and

protect wetlands and other coastal areas. It will restore our Great Lakes so they are drinkable, swimmable, fishable and sustainable, and will properly recognize the importance of the Great Lakes in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm pleased to add my voice and the voice of those in my fine riding of Oshawa to this debate on Bill 66, An Act to protect and restore the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin.

Today, of course, is Great Lakes Day, and we had the privilege of meeting with 115 mayors from the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative. They shared some great ideas, many that we've discussed not just today, but as we've talked about invasive species before, we've had these conversations and we recognize the importance.

One of the things that I would like to add to this debate is the focus on the need for a targeted, and real, wetlands strategy. This government is talking about a net loss strategy or a net loss framework. That might be a good place to start, but we need to move beyond that and start already looking ahead; that it's a net gain strategy, that we aren't just protecting what we have, that we are creating more, that we are restoring, that we are ensuring that wetlands are a real priority.

In the Durham region, Cranberry Marsh, Oshawa's Second Marsh, Duffins Creek Marsh: Those are some in Durham where we see important coastal wetland water level control strategies that have been employed and that are successful. If you're not familiar with wetlands, they do need that dynamic water level change for their ecosystem to really thrive.

That's a piece that we need to focus on when we're looking at our wetlands: some of these coalitions. In Oshawa, the city of Oshawa and Ducks Unlimited have been working together with Friends of the Second Marsh and also the Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority and Environment Canada. These are all the players that come together to ensure that our wetlands—the Second Marsh—are successful and are thriving.

We really do need to hold this government to account and make sure that with this bill, and any time that we're talking about the Great Lakes and the environment, we have clear targets, real funding, and ongoing and purposeful consultation.

Of course, we support the bill, but more importantly, we support healthy Great Lakes and ecosystems.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Well, I'm in a pretty envious position that in my riding, half of my riding drains into the Great Lakes and the other half drains into the Arctic watershed.

Something that everybody knows about my riding also is that tomorrow we will be celebrating the seven-month anniversary of the train derailment in Gogama, when millions of litres of crude went into the Makami River and the mouth at Minisinakwa Lake. I'm talking about

this because it has been seven months, with hundreds of workers on site and hundreds of thousands of dollars spent, but every day we are still taking away oily water, and oily debris continues to be removed daily from the collection points on the Makami and Minisinakwa Lake. It has been seven months and the work is not done. We all know that the fall pickerel spawning season is upon us. Where are those fish going to spawn if we continue to dredge the river and dredge the lake to remove the oil?

This is important to the people of Nickel Belt, but it should be important to everybody in this province because we have those trains carrying those millions of litres of crude going through all of our communities. When it derailed, when it exploded, when the fire started shooting 100 and 200 feet up in the air, the people of Gogama were scared. Seven months later, they are still trying to put their lives together. They are still trying to enjoy their waterways and their river. They are doing this on their own. They would like the provincial government to come and help them to make sure that the people who have done this to them don't do this to anybody else, but it's not happening.

1750

I also want to say that we have some wonderful stewardships of our waterways. One in my riding is called the Vermilion River Stewardship. It's headed by Linda Heron from my riding. Next Wednesday, we will get the results of a two-year study on phytoplankton in the Vermilion River. This has been a tremendous study that has gone on for the last two years to see the health of the Vermilion River as more and more people start to use the river. Vermilion is one of the rivers that drains into the Great Lakes. This study will be made public next Wednesday, the 14th, so I'm looking forward to that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Pursuant to the order of the House dated Tuesday, June 2, 2015, I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Murray has moved third reading of Bill 66, An Act to protect and restore the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I've just received a vote deferral. "To the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly:

"Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request that the vote on third reading be deferred until deferred votes on Wednesday, October 7, 2015."

Third reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Since there is no further business, pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

HOUSING SERVICES CORP.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member for Oxford has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given today by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter and, in this case, the parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

I now turn it over to the member for Oxford.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this misuse of taxpayers' dollars. I know I'm not supposed to disagree with the Speaker, but this was a dissatisfaction with the question I asked the minister yesterday.

Yesterday, during question period, I asked the minister about the fact that taxpayers' dollars intended for social housing had been used for paying for a personal vacation: an eight-day, seven-night, sightseeing trip in Cape Town, South Africa.

Today, I asked the minister if he had taken any steps to have the money repaid. In both instances, he failed to even mention the fact that taxpayers' dollars had been used for a vacation. Taxpayers deserve answers about where their money was used to pay for a vacation.

I have here an invoice from Go Touch Down Travel and Tours, which we obtained through a freedom-of-information request, for the expenses paid to Housing Services Corp. board members. The name on the invoice is Diane Deans, who was a board member of the Housing Services Corp., and the address is 390 Bay Street, which was Housing Services Corp.'s address.

The invoice says, "Tours: Cape Town, seven nights, eight days package rate includes: accommodation at Burgundy luxury apartments for seven nights/eight days; all meals—breakfast, lunch and dinner including gratuities on included meals; private driver/guide. Return airport transfers, all excursions and entrance fees." The total on the invoice for this vacation package is \$2,975.

I also have here an expense form from Diane Deans submitted to the Housing Services Corp. for accommodations in Cape Town, South Africa for—you guessed it, Mr. Speaker—\$2,975, the exact amount of the package vacation invoice.

The description of the vacation package from Go Touch Down Travel and Tours' website is, "The eight-day Cape Town tour will introduce you to local cultures, as well as decadent award-winning wine farms, and touch your heart as only the people of South Africa can. Explore major sights of this vibrant city on an open-top double decker red bus. Take in the breathtaking view as you ride a cable car to the summit of Table Mountain. Visit the infamous prison which was once home to Nelson Mandela for nearly two decades on Robben Island. During whale season catch a glimpse of a humpback whale at Hermanus. Enjoy guided tours of Cape Town's most popular destinations such as Cape Point, Camps Bay, Hout Bay, the Winelands, Kirstenbosch

Botanical Gardens and so much more." The website describes the luxury apartment in the Burgundy Estate, complete with lounge and dining room, and the many daily activities.

Some have tried to suggest that this vacation package was simply the accommodations for the four-day conference. That simply doesn't add up. In the same freedom-of-information request package was an accommodation expense for another board member, Jim Steele, who expensed \$1,472.06 at the Southern Sun Cape Sun Hotel where, in fact, the conference was held. Why would anybody pay twice as much to stay at a hotel over 20 kilometres away from that conference?

It's clear that there was a misuse of taxpayers' dollars, and it's also clear that the minister's independent review didn't uncover it, just like it failed to uncover all the other world travels and other expenses, such as the \$300 flannel shirts, and just like it failed to uncover the cost of Housing Services Corp. to social housing providers.

Toronto Community Housing reported that it would have saved \$6.3 million on their natural gas. Hamilton would have saved \$1.1 million. Stratford would have saved \$41,000. Oxford would have saved \$100,000. That's over \$7.5 million that was siphoned out of affordable housing in a single year from four municipalities alone because this government refused to let them opt out of the housing services contracts—\$7.5 million wasted because this government refused to call in the auditor to clean up this organization.

The minister will try to point fingers and say that they have fixed the problem, but it isn't fixed. The trip to South Africa happened in 2012, nine years after this government was elected. And the problems are still occurring. We started asking questions. The current CEO, who is now in charge of approving all expenses, has had to pay back thousands of dollars of inappropriate expenses.

We can't clean up this mess until we know the facts. Again, I ask the government to call the auditor, get her to open the books and try to get some of this social housing money back. Start with the cost of the luxury South African vacation taxpayers should never have paid for.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I turn it over now to the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's a pleasure to be here at this early time of the evening to debate.

Speaker, the Housing Services Corp. is an independent, non-profit corporation originally established under the Social Housing Reform Act, and continued with the reforms we later made in the Housing Services Act. The HSC is mandated to handle bulk purchasing of natural gas, insurance and social housing providers so that they can focus their efforts on the important work of supporting their tenants.

As he has said time and time again, the minister took immediate action as soon as he learned of concerning expenses activity at the HSC in years past.

The member opposite is well aware that the minister recommended to HSC that it undertake a comprehensive review of its policies related to compensation and expense remuneration, and implement changes to ensure rigorous control and oversight of its expense and compensation practices. The member opposite is also well aware that the review verified that HSC has taken the right steps towards improving accountability and transparency.

To refresh the member from Oxford's memory, here are some of the actions taken by our government and the HSC: (1) refining its business activities; (2) streamlining the organizational structure; (3) reducing overhead and administrative costs; (4) enhancing corporate reporting and transparency; and (5) revising board remuneration and expense policies so that these are in line with the Management Board of Cabinet's directives.

Mr. Speaker, the HSC has also committed to invite a third-party reviewer to report on the implementation of the recommendations, which they have fully accepted, and provide any additional changes that may improve the efficiency of the corporation.

In the spirit of openness, the minister has provided the member from Oxford with this third-party report from the review of the HSC on more than one occasion, and

yet he continues to plead ignorance to the critical changes that have been made there, which now include a stringent expense framework that prioritizes the transparent and efficient use of funds.

If the member opposite wants more information on what reforms were made by the HSC, I know the minister would be more than happy to sit down with him and provide a briefing of the actions being taken.

Finally, if the member opposite chooses to ignore the information the minister has already provided to him through correspondence and here in the House, and continues to make these erroneous claims that attempt to obscure the important changes at the HSC, I can only conclude that he cares less for the truth than he does about making unfounded criticisms.

Our government believes that our municipal housing partners should have a say in how best to receive the services they rely on. We will be listening to these partners in determining our way forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'd like to thank both members for this late show.

Since there's no further business, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1803.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, William Short

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Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Anderson, Granville (LIB)	Durham	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Simcoe–Lambton	
Baker, Yvan (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Ballard, Chris (LIB)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Brown, Patrick (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade / Ministre des Affaires civiles, de l'Immigration et du Commerce international
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care and Wellness) / Ministre associée de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée et Promotion du mieux-être) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure / Ministre du Développement économique, de l'Emploi et de l'Infrastructure
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
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Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Continued from back cover

Post-traumatic stress disorder

Mr. Rick Nicholls.....	5625
Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn.....	5625

Privatization of public assets

Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	5626
Hon. Bob Chiarelli.....	5626

Community policing

Ms. Ann Hoggarth.....	5626
Hon. Yasir Naqvi.....	5627

Road maintenance

Mr. Michael Harris.....	5627
Hon. Steven Del Duca.....	5627

Visitors

Mr. Joe Dickson.....	5627
Hon. James J. Bradley.....	5627
Hon. Jeff Leal.....	5628

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Oktoberfest

Mr. Michael Harris.....	5628
-------------------------	------

Bernie Campbell and Les Chaif

Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	5628
-------------------------	------

Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Day

Mr. Mike Colle.....	5628
---------------------	------

Pan Am and Parapan Am athletes

Mr. Bill Walker.....	5629
----------------------	------

Climate change

Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	5629
-----------------------	------

Arthur McDonald

Ms. Sophie Kiwala.....	5629
------------------------	------

Hispanic Heritage Month

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson.....	5629
---------------------------	------

Adoption

Ms. Daiene Vernile.....	5630
-------------------------	------

TD Tree Days

Mr. Lou Rinaldi.....	5630
----------------------	------

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES / RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS

Standing Committee on Government Agencies

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....	5630
Report deemed adopted.....	5630

Standing Committee on Social Policy

Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	5630
Report adopted.....	5630

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

Child Abuse Prevention Month / Mois de la prévention du mauvais traitement des enfants

Hon. Tracy MacCharles.....	5631
Ms. Sylvia Jones.....	5631
Miss Monique Taylor.....	5632

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Ontario Retirement Pension Plan

Mr. Bill Walker.....	5633
----------------------	------

Mental health and addiction services

Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	5633
-------------------------	------

Lung health

Ms. Sophie Kiwala.....	5633
------------------------	------

Air quality

Mr. Steve Clark.....	5634
----------------------	------

Diagnostic services

Mme France Gélinas.....	5634
-------------------------	------

Ontario Retirement Pension Plan

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry.....	5634
---------------------------	------

Privatization of public assets

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky.....	5634
------------------------	------

Ontario Retirement Pension Plan

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris.....	5635
-------------------------------	------

Privatization of public assets

Mme France Gélinas.....	5635
-------------------------	------

Lung health

Ms. Ann Hoggarth.....	5635
-----------------------	------

Poet laureate

Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	5635
-------------------------	------

Municipal restructuring

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry.....	5635
---------------------------	------

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Great Lakes Protection Act, 2015, Bill 66, Mr. Murray / Loi de 2015 sur la protection des Grands Lacs, projet de loi 66, M. Murray

Hon. Glen R. Murray.....	5636
Ms. Lisa M. Thompson.....	5638
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	5641
Mrs. Amrit Mangat.....	5645
Mr. Bill Walker.....	5646
Mr. John Vanthof.....	5648
Mr. Joe Dickson.....	5649
Mrs. Julia Munro.....	5650
Mr. Taras Natyshak.....	5651

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris.....	5651
Ms. Jennifer K. French	5652
Mme France G��linas.....	5652
Third reading vote deferred	5652

**ADJOURNMENT DEBATE / D  BAT SUR
LA MOTION D'AJOURNEMENT**

Housing Services Corp.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman	5653
Mr. Lou Rinaldi	5653

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Tuesday 6 October 2015 / Mardi 6 octobre 2015

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Protecting Condominium Owners Act, 2015, Bill 106, Mr. Orazietti / Loi de 2015 sur la protection des propriétaires de condominiums, projet de loi 106, M. Orazietti

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky	5605
Hon. Mario Sergio	5606
Mr. Steve Clark	5607
Mme France Gélinas	5607
Hon. Helena Jaczek	5607
Mrs. Lisa Gretzky	5608
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	5608
Ms. Lisa MacLeod	5609
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	5610
Mr. Arthur Potts	5610
Mrs. Julia Munro	5611
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	5611
Ms. Laurie Scott	5611
Ms. Jennifer K. French	5613
Hon. Michael Gravelle	5613
Mr. Robert Bailey	5613
Mr. Jagmeet Singh	5614
Ms. Laurie Scott	5614
Mr. Michael Mantha	5614
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	5616

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Percy Hatfield	5616
Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	5616
Hon. Bill Mauro	5616
Mr. John Vanthof	5616
Hon. Michael Chan	5616
Mr. Steve Clark	5616
Mr. Taras Natyshak	5616
Hon. Helena Jaczek	5616
Mr. Rick Nicholls	5616
Mr. Percy Hatfield	5616
Mrs. Cristina Martins	5616
Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	5616
Ms. Jennifer K. French	5617
Hon. Dipika Damerla	5617
Mr. John Yakabuski	5617
Ms. Soo Wong	5617

Mr. Robert Bailey	5617
Mr. Wayne Gates	5617
Mr. Granville Anderson	5617
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	5617
Mr. Arthur Potts	5617
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	5617

Wearing of pins

Mr. Granville Anderson	5617
------------------------------	------

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Executive compensation

Mr. Patrick Brown	5617
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	5617

Health care

Mr. Patrick Brown	5618
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	5618
Hon. Eric Hoskins	5619

Privatization of public assets

Ms. Andrea Horwath	5620
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	5620

International trade agreement

Ms. Andrea Horwath	5620
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	5620

By-election in Sudbury

Mr. Steve Clark	5621
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	5621

International trade agreement

Mr. Taras Natyshak	5622
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	5622

Child care

Mrs. Amrit Mangat	5623
Hon. Liz Sandals	5623

Housing Services Corp.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman	5623
Hon. Ted McMeekin	5623

International trade agreement

Mr. John Vanthof	5624
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	5624

Social services professionals

Mme Marie-France Lalonde	5624
Hon. Helena Jaczek	5625

Continued on inside back cover

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Wednesday 7 October 2015

Mercredi 7 octobre 2015



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 7 October 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 7 octobre 2015

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROTECTING CONDOMINIUM OWNERS ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LA PROTECTION DES PROPRIÉTAIRES DE CONDOMINIUMS

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 6, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 106, An Act to amend the Condominium Act, 1998, to enact the Condominium Management Services Act, 2015 and to amend other Acts with respect to condominiums / *Projet de loi 106, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur les condominiums, édictant la Loi de 2015 sur les services de gestion de condominiums et modifiant d'autres lois en ce qui concerne les condominiums.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): When we last discussed this bill, the member from Algoma-Manitoulin had completed his speech. We are now on questions and comments.

Mr. Chris Ballard: It gives me great pleasure to respond to our friend from Algoma-Manitoulin with regard to this bill. He made a number of very important points. It was interesting to hear his comments about his community and there not being too many condominiums.

I come from north of Toronto, a small community called Newmarket and Aurora, and over the past 10, 15 years we've seen a tremendous growth in condominiums, especially as our communities have filled the remaining green space with more typical homes that you would find in an urban setting.

Really, the only way to grow in our communities is up, so over the last 10, 15 years we've seen a number of mid-rise condominiums go in—six, eight stories. In Newmarket, they're looking at going even higher. It's a somewhat new built form in our community and it's one that, coming from a municipal background, we've had to adjust to.

As a municipal councillor, I was always one of the first who new condo owners would call when they had issues with their developer or with their condo board or whatever. The tools that we had to help them with their

issues oftentimes were limited, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted to see that this bill will be addressing some very important facts like licensing condo managers, improving governance and oversight of condo boards, and providing a relatively inexpensive way for owners and boards to resolve some of the disputes they have without going a more expensive way, that of going to court.

I look forward to seeing this bill move into committee and listening to what the parties opposite can bring forward in ways of improving it. I thank everyone for their support.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I do want to speak about the perspective of the member from Algoma-Manitoulin. Of course, he and I are both northern boys and we do take a different look at this. While we look forward, as you just said, to having this bill come to committee, one of the things we'll talk about, in terms of this condo act, are the differences in the requirements of heavily populated urban centres versus the north.

We do have condominiums in the north. Some are small, and some just won't be able to quite match up with the new rules and regulations that are contemplated in this, such as the designing of a website to have access. There are a lot of places in northern Ontario, quite frankly, where we don't even have dial-up website and access. It's just the reality. When I drive in my riding from North Bay to Mattawa, there's a good chunk of the area where we don't have service. It's just the reality of living in two-thirds the size of the population.

So there are certain respects, I've said quite frequently in this Legislature, where it cannot be cookie-cutter, one-size-fits-all. As long as the acknowledgment is there that we really do need a separate set of guidelines that pertain to northern Ontario—you can't always have a Toronto-centric solution to a Toronto problem, because it does spill over and ties in the rest of the province with these issues.

So with respect to the condo owners in my community of North Bay and some of the smaller communities—I have 10 mayors that I serve in my area, 10 different municipalities. Some are as small as 200 or 300 people; they have a mayor. When you look at the rules that are set up for condos, they cannot be that onerous on these smaller communities.

Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I was really delighted to be in the House yesterday, listening to the member from Algoma-Manitoulin. I wanted to compliment him on his rendition of Rosario Marchese. It was very entertaining to watch a Frenchman channel an Italian. I have to say it was very good.

The member talked about how there are not a lot of condo complexes in northern Ontario; people purchase single-family homes. I compared that to maybe what's happening in Toronto and what's happening in London, because we do have a lot of condo buildings: We have high-rises, and we have townhomes. As people are aging, they look for alternative dwellings. A lot of seniors may not be able to cut the lawn and shovel the driveway or do those repairs outside that maybe they could do when they were younger. Having a condo option really alleviates some of that.

I'd be interested to see, as the years progress, if the northern areas of Ontario accommodate some of those needs for seniors. Seniors usually want to stay in the neighbourhood or the area they raised their kids in; they don't want to move far away from family, and I understand that northern ridings are huge and vast. So, talking about regional differences, this bill should acknowledge that there are regional differences in Ontario, and when bills are developed, we should keep in mind that other parts of Ontario have needs as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: It's sad to hear someone say that this is a Toronto problem. I mean, there are 1.3 million Ontarians who live in condos. Condos are in every riding of this province. The people who live in condos come from all over Ontario. They are people from all walks of life and from every community. They come to work and live in different cities of Ontario. And 300,000 people are employed in this industry building condos.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Barrie.

Mr. Mike Colle: Three hundred thousand people work in this industry. It's critically important that we take this on and not say it's a Toronto problem. It's an Ontario situation that needs addressing. It needs some new legislation to protect the 1.3 million Ontarians who call these condos home. How basic can you get? It's our job. We can't let these 1.3 million people live in a situation where there's obviously—and there have been many suggestions. There has been all kinds of important input from Rosario Marchese, from Tracy MacCharles—18 months of consultations.

0910

Everybody agrees that we've got to do things for the betterment of the people of Ontario who call these condos home. That's the reality. They're not just in Toronto. That's why we need to do something to help these people who are asking for dispute resolution. They're asking for rules; they're asking to protect their lifetime investment.

To ignore that lifetime investment is just stupid, as far as I'm concerned.

We have a duty to do this. This is one of the most important pieces of legislation we'll probably do, I think, in this term—1.3 million people. We've got to get the job done and not say it's a Toronto problem—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. The member from Algoma-Manitoulin has two minutes.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I want to thank the members from Newmarket-Aurora, Nipissing, London-Fanshawe and, the last speaker, Eglinton-Lawrence. It's unfortunate; I thought you were here when I delivered my comments yesterday, because the points that you just raised are exactly the points that I had spoken about. It's not just a home; it's the dream of having that home: That's where I'm going to live. That's where I'm going to be raising my family. So when I'm putting my hopes and my dreams into a goal that I'm looking forward to, I want to make sure that those are there and that the mechanisms to address those problems are actually there.

The member from Nipissing brought up a really interesting point. We're not saying that northern Ontario is different. We're not saying that it's better; we're not saying that it's worse. We're asking the government to recognize the challenges that are there, and they are unique. There are different issues. I always use this example when I'm talking to my constituents back home. When we see policy coming from this government, I refer to it as the white paintbrush syndrome. You cannot paint the entire province with a white paintbrush and think that it's going to fix everything. You have to recognize that there are dynamics, there are different areas, there are different challenges throughout this province. My comments that I made during the time that I spoke yesterday were that I look forward to having the opportunity to explain those when this goes to committee.

I give a lot of credit to the individual who is quite knowledgeable about this, who has been speaking about this for the last eight or 10 years, one named Rosario Marchese. I'm sure my friend from Eglinton-Lawrence was here, just across the way from him, as he spoke so passionately about this issue. To you, my friend, as Rosie would say, we'll do it together. We'll do it together. And to you, Mr. Speaker, God bless.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. And to you, the member from Algoma-Manitoulin, you will talk to me, not the other member.

Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: I was here in 1998 when the first condo act was brought forward. I know that at that time, a lot of work went into it. It was over two years of work that was brought in by the previous government. I'm quite aware of how complex and important this legislation is. At that time, we tried to do the best we could to protect Ontarians who invest in these homes. The number of deputations we had, the experts, the citizens who came forward trying to improve the legislation—it was quite commendable.

That's why, going forward now, I think we all have to appreciate how incredibly complex the condo act is. It really takes incredibly convoluted legal matters, real estate issues, property standards issues, municipal issues—and it affects so many people. That is why it's so critical that we take time to do this right.

It is very important to look at the long range here. This act will have to undergo all kinds of tests, because it is going to be very, very difficult to solve all of these problems. As the member from Newmarket–Aurora was telling me, his elderly aunt, who bought a condo years ago on the shore of the Humber River, has a great penthouse condo, but now that condo is under mortgage watch. The reason for that, like a number of condos that may be under mortgage watch, is because of the fact that a lot of people who buy condos really abhor the condo fees.

They get assessed certain fees if the parking garage deteriorates, the swimming pool has to be fixed, the roof leaks. What happens is that it's a natural tendency for people to say, "Well, I don't want to pay more this month and have this increased assessment." So they kept on putting off these repairs. Subsequently, you get in a situation where now there are major, major repairs, to the point that some condos cannot be sold because people can't get a mortgage for them. So it is very serious.

I had a condo on Dufferin Street in my area just last year. It was one of the first condos in Ontario. The people living there have been living there since the 1970s, when it was built. Because they're elderly and they're living on fixed incomes, they've tended to put off maintenance. So this year they got hit with a huge maintenance fee: upkeep, the garage, the front entranceway, the roof. So a lot of them came to me, saying, "We can't afford to pay this huge new assessment. Would you talk with the property manager?"

In fact, the property manager happens to be an old football player of mine, Tony Seljak, who happens to be in the property management business. He said, "Listen, I'll do what I can. We'll work out a payment system. But the roof and the garage have got to be fixed." That's the reality of what happens, and that's just one small part of this act.

There are so many parts that affect—as I said, the city of Toronto, for instance, or the city of Mississauga or the city of Brampton all come into play with this. Right now there is a major lawsuit against the city of Toronto over the Condominium Act, and that is the result of the fact that people living in condominiums pay very high taxes. They say, "Why should we be paying more taxes than, or as many taxes as, people living in a detached home and then we don't get snow clearance, we don't get these potholes filled in our parking lot? Therefore, the city should also come and clear our snow on private property because we're paying taxes for that equal to the other people." It's a very interesting case. It's before the courts right now. It will be interesting what the decision is, because it could affect people and municipalities right across this province in terms of the relationship with

condominiums. So there's another example of the complexity of all of these.

The bill itself tries to deal with 2,200 recommendations. She's not here right now, but the Minister of Children and Youth Services and women's issues spent a couple of years trying to listen to people and work with various groups, trying to come up with this act. As I said, it has been going on for years, trying to get the fundamentals of this act together. She should be given an award for patience and for the good work that she did. She is never mentioned, but she did a lot of work, as she does in a lot of areas. So there are a lot of people who have shown an interest in this.

It is critical that we understand that there is no silver bullet in fixing this form of home ownership. It is extremely, as I said, legalistic. Most lawyers who deal with real estate have no idea about the condo act.

Interjection: Here she is.

Mr. Mike Colle: Speaking of the minister, she is here now.

Anyway, when you buy a condo, there are so many things to be aware of. You're going to be living with a couple hundred, 300, 400 people.

There is a new building going up on Yonge Street in Toronto that has 99 storeys. Can you imagine living in that building and all agreeing on paying assessment fees, on paying condo fees? It's pretty challenging getting everybody to agree. But I think we all agree that we've got a good foundation here. Everybody has come up with some good suggestions.

I think we've got to go forward, and it is important at this time that we bring in all of the experts, all of the stakeholders to bring forward their ideas on how to improve this bill. We've got to open up to the public this discussion on making this act a good one. We've got to bring the public in as soon as we can.

Therefore, at this time, Mr. Speaker, we need to refer this to committee as soon as possible. Bring in the public. As a result, I move that the question be now put.

0920

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order.

Mr. Mike Colle: Mr. Speaker, in case you didn't hear me: I move that the question be now put.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Eglinton–Lawrence has moved that the question now be put. I'm personally satisfied that there has been sufficient debate to allow the question to be put to the House. Shall the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This vote will be taken during deferred votes.

Vote deferred.

STRENGTHENING AND IMPROVING
GOVERNMENT ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LE RENFORCEMENT
ET L'AMÉLIORATION
DE LA GESTION PUBLIQUE

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 1, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 85, An Act to strengthen and improve government by amending or repealing various Acts / Projet de loi 85, Loi visant à renforcer et à améliorer la gestion publique en modifiant ou en abrogeant diverses lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker, and good morning to you. I will be sharing my time this morning with the distinguished members from York South-Weston, Barrie and Ottawa-Orléans.

Mr. Todd Smith: Sounds like a roll call.

Hon. Jeff Leal: It is a roll call, I heard my friend from Prince Edward-Hastings telling me. But it's interesting, there will be no more roll calls for the Belleville Bulls this season since they've moved to your very distinguished city of Hamilton, Mr. Speaker.

In the members' east gallery today I'd like to welcome some distinguished leaders from Glengarry, Prescott and Russell, because this is Glengarry-Prescott-Russell day here at Queen's Park. Please stand up. There we go.

I want to say good morning to everybody in the great riding of Peterborough. I know they're waking up and tuning in to Cogeco station 95. I welcome them this morning.

Mr. John Yakabuski: They've been awake for hours. People in Peterborough don't sleep in until 9:30.

Hon. Jeff Leal: They've already got half their day in, so they're just switching to 95.

Interjection.

Hon. Jeff Leal: They are. They're enjoying their Egg McMuffins.

Mr. Speaker, I've to get going here on Bill 85. One of the most important aspects of Bill 85—I'm sure this is shared in common for members of all sides—are the changes we're going to make to the family responsibility act.

Mr. Speaker, you and I both know that many of us at our offices have individuals who come in on a very frequent basis to talk about the challenges that they have under the family responsibility act, or with the Family Responsibility Office, particularly when it comes to support payments for individuals. It's always a very sad situation when you have a matrimonial breakup. It's very difficult on all parties involved, particularly for children. So there are significant provisions in this act today, Bill 85, that will allow us to handle the FRO payments in a much more efficient way. It will allow for much better tracking of the FRO process. It will also make sure that when Family Court judges make decisions in terms of support for children, those decisions are indeed enacted

to provide that vital support that is needed by families when they find themselves in very difficult positions.

Mr. Speaker, there are also amendments to the City of Toronto Act, 2006. These amendments were asked for particularly by the Toronto Transit Commission to allow them to expand service to York region and neighbouring municipalities by adjusting provisions of the act.

This is a very important amendment today to allow us to facilitate the Big Move forward, which is a very ambitious plan in the greater Toronto-Hamilton area to provide that transit in a wide variety of means, whether it's subways, whether it's buses or whether it's light rail, to make sure that various areas are solved. These amendments here today will allow us to facilitate the important planning that needs to be done by Metrolinx into areas outside of the city of Toronto border. So this is a very important piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, something that you'll also be very interested in, as a former city councillor in Hamilton: It's about to improve the administration of the Provincial Offences Act. You well know, as a former municipal leader in Hamilton, part of the Who Does What exercise at the end of the 1990s—I know we, in Peterborough, gave that a new name; it was the "who got done in" committee. I know my municipal leaders from every part of Ontario certainly reflected on that new name that we gave to that exercise, the "who got done in" committee. There was universal support of how we renamed the famous Who Does What committee of the late 1990s.

To give credit where credit is due—and I'm a very fair individual—under the Provincial Offences Act, part of that exercise was to make sure that municipalities were given the revenue that would be generated under the Provincial Offences Act, namely, quite commonly, our parking tickets. I know I've received my share of parking tickets in the city of Peterborough and went to the POA office in Peterborough to pay the appropriate fine. One of the provisions of Bill 85 is to allow more technology to be used in processing these tickets. Ultimately, that will allow us and municipalities to get that revenue that was part of that agreement that was negotiated between the then government in power, AMO and the municipalities right across the province of Ontario.

This act also has a number of other provisions that I think are very important. I know many of us who had the privilege of serving in municipal government, particularly with EMS services—these operators that have non-emergency stretcher transportation, some of those vehicles that were used for this particular activity were not in very good shape. So we're bringing in new requirements to make sure that they have the same standards that EMS vehicles have right across the province of Ontario.

With that, I will cede the floor to my other colleagues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from York South-Weston.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Thank you for recognizing me, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to speak to the Strengthening and Improving Government Act, an act that aims to make government more efficient and more effective, I

would say. If passed, this bill will strengthen and update existing legislation—15 different pieces of legislation, to be exact. These changes will make it easier for families and for businesses by improving and modernizing some government processes.

I've been following much of the debate that has been taking place on Bill 85. Many of my colleagues have highlighted the most important items contained in this bill; for example, proposed amendments to the Family Law Act, which would require every person whose income is used as part of a child support order to provide the other parent with updated financial and contact information on an annual basis. In other words, this would make sure that children get what they need, what they're entitled to, in terms of child support.

Ms. Soo Wong: That's right. It's a good thing.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Yes, it's a very good thing. Many families have issues with that. It just streamlines it for people who are in that situation.

Other amendments that are contained in this bill: the amendments to the Highway Traffic Act on stretcher transportation services. This aims to improve the safety and reliability of private sector non-emergency stretcher transportation services in Ontario. I know that many of my colleagues have spoken about this initiative that is part of the bill. In other words, these amendments will make sure that vehicles would need to meet specific requirements, contain prescribed equipment, and meet inspection and maintenance standards. Drivers and attendants would also be required to meet these minimum standards. This is really important because it would regulate the sector that, right now, is not safe enough and needs more oversight.

Another initiative contained in this bill are the amendments to the City of Toronto Act. This will help make it easier for the Toronto Transit Commission to expand service to York region and other neighbouring municipalities by adjusting provisions in the act. This will allow for greater transit collaboration between transit agencies across the greater Toronto and Hamilton area.

0930

Why is that important? Because I think that few people today have the fortune of working close to their home. In the riding that I have the privilege to represent, York South–Weston, for example, through the years industry has been disappearing. This has been happening in all the major urban centres, so people's jobs are farther away. I have residents who work in the city of Vaughan. They work in Richmond Hill. They work in Mississauga. They work in Brampton.

Industries that at one time were a vital part of the riding—I can name Kodak; I can name CCM, which used to manufacture bicycles; the Moffat stove factory—they are all gone. Some have stayed, such as Irving Tissue, which is still one of the main employers in my area, but the majority of them have moved away.

So people need to go to where the jobs are, and therefore need better transit. That's why our government

is investing in transit, but that's why we also need to make it easier for municipalities.

Because of the number of amendments that are included in this bill and because it does aim at modernizing what we do here in government, I will be supporting this bill, and I hope that everyone else will; I think I've heard consensus amongst all our colleagues. We want to get this bill passed, so that we can help individuals, families and businesses in our province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Barrie.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Thank you, Speaker. Good morning. I believe that this bill, the Strengthening and Improving Government Act, is very important. It covers a lot of issues. In particular, the one that I hear constantly in my constituency office is about the Family Responsibility Office and the difficulty with young families, whether it be a single mother or a single father, trying to get the money that has been set aside every month for their children's upbringing. I think that this bill hopefully will help get that done much more quickly. I think that is the good thing to do. Children should not suffer because mom and dad are having difficulty dealing with each other. They shouldn't be hurt in this whole situation. It's bad enough that they are now in a broken family.

The Strengthening and Improving Government Act includes a number of small but important measures that will improve the efficiency and the responsiveness of government. We are looking at many aspects of government, trying to modernize processes and make systems easier to manage. To meet the needs of Ontarians, these public services require a solid foundation. We are taking action through this act to strengthen and update existing legislation.

There are amendments to the Highway Traffic Act, particularly about stretcher transportation services. The government is taking action to improve the safety and reliability of private sector non-emergency stretcher transportation services in Ontario.

As I said, proposed changes to the Family Law Act will help ensure that the new administrative child support service is as effective as possible in assisting children to receive appropriate levels of financial support from their parents. Quite frankly, as parents, we should be looking after our children.

Amendments to the Courts of Justice Act: These proposed changes will help to effectively implement new federal family legislation in Ontario.

Amendments to the City of Toronto Act: The proposed change will help make it easier for the Toronto Transit Commission to expand service to York region. I know my colleague from Newmarket–Aurora is happy for that, and other neighbouring municipalities will benefit from adjusting provisions in this act. This will allow for greater transit collaboration between transit agencies across the greater Toronto and Hamilton area. I know, Speaker, you'll like that.

Why are we making these changes now? We're always looking at the many aspects of government, trying

to modernize processes and make systems easier to navigate. While some of these proposed amendments were part of the previous strengthening-and-improving-government bill, we also found new ways to make improvements through our ongoing review processes.

Our goal is to meet the needs of Ontarians, and public services require a solid foundation. We're taking action through this act to strengthen and update, as I said, existing legislation. This is not new legislation; it's improving previous legislation. I really think that all of the aspects of this bill, including the amendment about making provincial offences documents electronic—these amendments do not have cost implications. They clear the way legally for Provincial Offences Act courts to manage cases more efficiently. We all want that to happen; we know how those things can get dragged down. Municipalities run most of the Provincial Offences Act courts and so would bear any costs of additional modernization they choose to implement.

It will be necessary to make minor amendments to regulations to align this section of the Provincial Offences Act numbering, ensuring consistent language and making other minor housekeeping amendments in consultation with the municipal stakeholders. The six-month time period will allow these steps to occur.

I urge you to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Ottawa—Orléans.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: It's interesting that some of the members from the opposition are somewhat shocked that we, as members, are happy to stand up and speak on this wonderful bill.

I would like to start by maybe giving a little bit of history about the background as to what happened, because some people may say, "What happened on December 11, 2013?" The Minister of Government Services introduced Bill 151, the Strengthening and Improving Government Act. That bill included changes to five pieces of legislation. In May 2014, as most Ontarians know, the bill died on the order paper.

Before we introduced this very important piece of legislation, ministries were asked to submit additional items that were non-contentious but did require policy approval and that would have a most positive impact for stakeholders by improving the efficiencies and the responsiveness of our government.

I'm very happy, actually, to share my voice with my colleagues this morning in talking about the Strengthening and Improving Government Act. I would like to say that I know some of my colleagues have talked about what happened with our new families, the reality of our society. Sometimes, in my office in Ottawa—Orléans—and one of my staff members always, every Friday, when I come back to the office, says, "You know, Marie-France, we need to look at FRO. This is a situation where it has to be dealt with." I'm very happy that one of the components of this bill is actually about this, right?

When you look at the change and structure of family members, a child should not be penalized for a decision

that parents make. Certainly I think it's an important aspect of our bill and a much-needed aspect of what can make a real difference for the people and the children who are going through those realities.

0940

By updating and amending the Family Law Act, like I said, it helps the situation that these children are going through. This is an important piece that I wanted to highlight. I'm sure that Nathalie, who is in my office, will be happy that, if passed, this bill will help those children and those families in Ottawa—Orléans, in my neck of the woods, but I'm sure in some other ridings of my colleagues here in the House.

Another component—I'm not sure if people have talked about it, but I just want to highlight it. As a former business owner, something we take very seriously is the Occupational Health and Safety Act. Seriously, the worst thing for an employer is when their workers get injured. Certainly, Mr. Speaker, this is something that the government is taking very seriously. This particular bill will actually help improve workers' health and safety. Employers and workers will have access to a broader range of information about hazardous workplace chemicals. Everything that is currently in place will not change, but I want to highlight, and I only have a few seconds, that what will be most important is that there will be a portion where the employer will be required to identify chemicals and that the safety data sheet shows the chemicals in the workplace. But now the education component will have to be part of the employer's work.

Mr. Speaker, I need to end, and I wish I had a little bit more time, but certainly this is an important piece of legislation, and I hope that all members will agree with me.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Todd Smith: I would blame the member for Peterborough; he took your time. That's why you didn't have enough time to continue speaking this morning.

Do you know what? The name of this bill is like putting it on a tee for the opposition parties. What is it called again? It's called the Strengthening and Improving Government Act. If there is one thing we know, this government needs to improve. That's for sure. It's like putting it on a tee. You don't need a pitcher and a catcher when you're talking about strengthening and improving the things that this government is doing.

Every summer I go to this event called the Sand Lake Summit. We have a great bunch of guys who go up there every August to Ted and Ron Reid's cottage on Sand Lake. It's a beautiful lake in Frontenac township. John, Darrell, Chuck, Chris, Mike, Todd and Trevor are all there. We sit down and discuss all the problems that are going on in Ontario and the problems that are going on in the world. This is just a beautiful setting. There are cottages all around us. All the bigwigs have cottages. I can't afford a cottage, but I go up to Sand Lake and enjoy looking at the cottages. Gaylord Hardwood Flooring has

a beautiful cottage there. They, of course, specialize in hardwood and click flooring and tongue-and-groove.

We talk about all of the things that are wrong in the province of Ontario right now, and we sort out some of the ways we can fix it. The biggest problem facing Ontario: Electricity rates are through the roof, making us a less desirable place for people to come and set up their company and do business. This is the red tape capital of Canada. It's the red tape capital of North America. They're driving people out of the province because of the cumbersome bureaucracy you face when you come here. Taxation: Every time this government has an opportunity to raise taxes and make it more difficult to locate and expand and build jobs, these guys are doing it.

Let's fix electricity. Let's fix red tape. Let's fix the taxation in Ontario and get it right.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Essex.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm inclined to agree with my colleague.

Interjections.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yes, really; that comes as a surprise to you guys. That you would take time in this Legislature to present a bill that essentially is house-keeping, that could have been done through regulation—why are you dragging your feet on some of the most important issues that our communities face? Lobby your own government, lobby your ministers and lobby your caucus to get to the table with issues and policies that actually affect our communities. Skyrocketing hydro rates: If your phones aren't burning up in your constituency offices, or melting, then you're not listening to the people out there. They are having an incredible time making ends meet—just on the hydro file alone, let alone the fact that people can't find good-paying jobs in this country, and in this province especially. You have done absolutely nothing. But what do we get? We get an omnibus, innocuous bill that does nothing, that could have been taken care of through a budget bill, but you decided to just pad some sort of, you know—whatever it is. I haven't really seen anything like this in a long time. It begs the question: What are you doing? Have you run out of steam? Do you not have any new ideas? Do you not have any inclination to support the communities that we represent? What does this do? What does it do? You have to give your heads a shake. My goodness.

The Clerks at the table must be thinking, "Is this the best they can come up with? Do we not have other priorities to deal with in this House?"

Interjections.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It's nice to see the government so lively now. You have got so many words you want to shout at me and heckle me with, but put them into some legislation. If you've got so much passion, do something substantive and make a difference in this province. This is nothing. You know it. You'll stand up and you'll read your lines that have been written for you but, really, realistically, there's not much coming out of that government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Grant Crack: It's certainly a pleasure to be able to make some comments regarding those that were just previously made by the member from Essex and the member from Prince Edward-Hastings, but I would be remiss if I didn't follow up on the Minister of Agriculture's—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Okay. The yelling stops. The cross-discussion stops. It goes to the Chair. I'm almost at my limit. I've let a lot go this morning.

Continue.

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Again, I would be remiss if I didn't welcome members from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell here. From the United Counties of Prescott and Russell, I have Mayor François St. Amour from the municipality of The Nation. We've got the mayor of Russell township, Pierre Leroux; we've got Jean Leduc, the CAO of Russell township; and Dominique Tremblay, who is the chief planner. Welcome to Queen's Park. I'm sure they're very entertained.

I want to go back to what the member from Prince Edward-Hastings had talked about. He said this is a bill about improving, or not improving. Well, we just spent two and a half years in a minority government prior to June 12 of last year and we couldn't get anything done in this House. The bells rang constantly.

Anyway, we went to the polls, the people of Ontario actually made a decision and they chose our government again, in a majority. We're going to improve some of the legislation. I think it's incumbent upon us as a government to take a look at pieces of legislation that are outdated, probably put in by the Conservative Party when they were in power for too long.

The member from Essex, he's talking about regulation as opposed to legislation. These are bills and they have to be amended through the legislative process, so I'm very pleased that this bill has come forward. I think it's necessary. It's going to make it easier for families across the province and in my riding of Glengarry-Prescott-Russell. It's going to amend 15 acts. One of them in particular which is of concern to me is the Family Law Act, through the Ministry of the Attorney General. It's going to help to determine child support payments in the future, so I think that's a good step forward. Thank you very much for the time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I have to agree with my colleague here, the member of the third party. Have they not got anything better to do? You look at this bill, and it's a caretaker at best. Things could have been done through regulation. I look at the bill—and we're going to committee this afternoon—to stop using coal in hydroelectric plants. The bill was introduced after we quit using coal in all plants in Ontario. I mean, this government is—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Barrie and the member from Scarborough—Agin-court.

Mr. Jim McDonell:—having a hard time coming up with any more ideas.

Meanwhile, the phone in my office is ringing off the hook with problems in this province. Hydro bills: Did they not notice, when they went to rural Ontario, people were turning their backs on their float? They were being polite, they weren't booing. That's what people in this province are thinking.

The member opposite talked about the minority government. The minority government allowed us to get at some of the scandals this government has put upon itself. Ornge, the gas plants; all of that would never come out if it wasn't for the minority government, and they quickly squashed everything they could afterward.

This is a government that talks transparency but does not want to see transparency because it's embarrassing for them. There are people that literally should be in jail, but they have the power of the majority, the power of this government, to squash those, and they've done that. We see in committees where questions come up trying to get information, and those questions are squashed.

0950

Really, writing about better government—it's far too long. This government should start looking at itself and try to figure out how they can actually improve this system, get our taxes down, get our hydro rates reasonable and stop wondering why business is leaving. It's very obvious: regulation. The cost of doing business in this province is no longer competitive. We're somewhat worried about the new trade agreement because we're not competitive.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from York South—Weston has two minutes.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I want to thank all the members who have contributed and added their comments to the Strengthening and Improving Government Act: the members for Prince Edward—Hastings, Essex, Glengarry—Prescott—Russell and Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

We're the number one province for foreign direct investment, and that should mean something. The bill is about small changes, but sometimes small changes are the ones that make the most difference in a person's life. Legislation needs to be updated. Sometimes we complain that things are not brought forward to the Legislature. Well, we are bringing amendments to 15 different bills with Bill 85. Members should be welcoming that. I want to say that we have to respect the legislative process, and this is what we're doing.

To the member from Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry I want to say that I went this year, as I do every year, to the International Plowing Match in Finch. We had a great reception—such warm people, very welcoming. It was great to speak to everyone who was there. I really enjoyed it, and so did many of my colleagues who were there—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock. I'm not going to point out anyone in particular, but there are a couple of loud discussions going on. If you want to have a debate, go outside and have a debate. Thank you.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, the changes that are in this bill will help individuals, will help families, will help businesses in our province.

This is a great province. It is very diverse. It's great that we are so different, and yet we have so much in common. That's what we have to highlight: the things that we have in common and how to improve, how to strengthen the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to join the debate this morning. I came in here this morning fully prepared. I had painstakingly prepared a speech on Bill 106, the condo act. I went to a great deal of effort to research the facts and have my comments written and prepared, and of course, I was unable to deliver my address on Bill 106, because the first thing that happened this morning was that as soon as the government had the opportunity, they had their designated guillotine operator here come and lower the boom—the hammer, the guillotine—and crush debate on Bill 106. Because in the government's mind, well, they've talked about it enough. But there are 107 members in this Legislature, and I think that when our forefathers conceived the parliamentary system here in Ontario that is modelled after the British system, they believed that all members should have the opportunity to speak to legislation. Well, in this Parliament, apparently that's not the case.

Anyway, I will move on. I will adapt. I will adapt and I will speak to—well, I will speak to Bill 85, in a manner of speaking, because what I can't understand is the gall of this government to even title a bill an "act to strengthen and improve government."

They were parsing this out. Originally—it isn't in the title of the bill—they were colloquially calling it the good governance bill. I'll tell you that when I talk to people in my riding and when I travel across this province, the best thing these people could do to serve good governance would be to tender a group resignation. That would be about the best thing they could do. Since they won their majority, which they crow about all the time, somehow they think that their whole program has been accepted—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock. I hope I don't have to say anything, because I'm going to go to warnings.

Mr. John Yakabuski:—and embraced by the public. Nothing could be further from the truth. We all know that the results of the 2014 election were anything but an endorsement of the Liberals—anything but an endorsement of the Liberals. Since then, everything has gone downhill from there for them. They know it, so they're trying to cloud the air and muddy the waters with bills that they'd like to call the good governance bill.

The tradition in this House is that you have the opportunity to speak to a bill, and we're told, "You can speak to what's in the bill." But the nice thing about the other side of the convention here is that you can speak to what the bill doesn't talk about and maybe it should in order to justify the title "improving government."

Let me start with hydro rates in this province. They are killing this economy because of hydro rates. I'm sitting in estimates this week—my partner from Prince Edward-Hastings as well as I—and we've been asking questions of the Minister of Energy. My God, the answers—we don't get answers; we get a diatribe about how wonderful it is under the Liberals, but never a direct answer to the question, questions that I ask like, "What are you supposed to say to Mr. And Mrs. John Doe who can't afford to heat their homes because they've got electric heat?" They're in their late seventies, maybe their early eighties. They built a home in the 1970s when the world was telling them to heat with hydro, and they can't afford the hydro bills anymore. On top of that, they installed air conditioning because their physician has said both of them have respiratory issues—and we want to keep them at home. "We want to keep them at home"—this is what the government says. They want to keep everybody at home as long as they can, which is the best place for them. They want to keep them at home, so the doctor has told them, "You must have air conditioning in the summertime. You will not be able to live in that home under the heat and humidity of Ontario."

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order. Minister?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I would like to hear about my beautiful bill that is before the House, and the people from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell would like to hear about my good governance bill. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you about your lovely bill, but the member is talking about good governance, and that's part of your bill.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Speaker. I appreciate your indulgence on that, because they don't want to talk about what's not in this bill. They've made such a mess of this province that they want the cone of silence to descend across the province so nobody can talk about what they're not doing—what they're not doing to help those senior citizens who are going broke, who are making choices between heating and eating because of the hydro rates in this province. No, the Attorney General doesn't want to talk about that. You know what? We're going to talk about that. If you won't defend the people of Ontario, this party will.

So when we talk about that couple who can't afford hydro, we're talking about one example of 13 million Ontarians who can't afford hydro in this province. What does the government do? It doubles down on its failed energy policies. I asked the minister, "What can we expect on November 1?" He and the deputy just fudged all around it. I said, "What can we expect on November 1 when we've seen what has happened already this year?"

The global adjustment cost Ontarians \$7.7 billion in 2013 and roughly the same in 2014.

The global adjustment, which is that part of the hydro bill that pays for all of those fancy contracts they've made with these winds developers and the like, in 2015 to the end of August had already cost Ontario ratepayers \$6.4 billion. I asked the minister, "Where are we going with hydro rates on November 1?" No answer. The deputy says, "Well, the Ontario Energy Board will set those rates." Do you not think that the Ministry of Energy has access to all of the data that goes into that decision as to what the rates are going to be?

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You can rest assured, ladies and gentlemen, that that announcement about what hydro rates are going to be on November 1—do you know when it will be made? It will be made during the constituency week, probably in the seventh inning of a Blue Jays game when nobody could care less about what's going on in this Legislature.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, I ask the member to at least refer to our bill. We have 15 points; he likes to say everything else. I think there's enough to discuss this morning.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I think I've given the member a little latitude, to say the least. I think if you could at least mention the bill occasionally, and some of the things in the bill, that would be appropriate.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I will certainly do that. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The government should stand up and say, "This is what the rates are going to be," and not try and hide it through the announcement when the news cycle isn't paying any attention to that. That's good governance, when you tell the people what they can expect. People need to budget for the future.

The other thing about good governance—and I really do believe that this is all part of this bill because it says, "to improve government." Well, government, as we know it in a democracy, Speaker, is a representation of what the people are asking for. Everybody, 13 million Ontarians, can't come to Queen's Park and run the government. So individually, in their constituencies, they send a member, and the members are collectively supposed to do what is best for those 13 million Ontarians. That is government. In the essence, it is a representation of what the people expect.

Do you know what the people expect? They expect transparency and they expect accountability from their government, and they expect their government to accept responsibility.

I'll give you another example of good governance. Good governance would be that—and it has been shown in the past—when a minister or a senior official is under investigation and under a cloud, until that investigation has cleared the books that minister or that senior official will step down. Until the air is cleared, they will step

down. We've got a situation here in Ontario where the Premier has the power. She has a senior Liberal—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order, the member from Ottawa—Orléans.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, I think we've been trying, on this side of the House, to very nicely ask the member, through the Speaker, to refer to our bill. If I may say, it's contrary to standing order 23(b)(i). The member should come back to this wonderful bill that we have about strengthening Ontario, a key factor that we collectively have heard put forward by Minister Meilleur.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I have mentioned to the member, as you know, about the latitude I gave him, to try to get back to the bill. I read it. I believe the bill says there are 15 acts that are affected by this bill. That's a lot of acts and a lot of governance involved there.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'm talking and I don't need other people interjecting.

I think the bottom line is the member could come a little further towards talking about the act as opposed to going off on some tangents. But, I might add, while the member was off on his tangents, there were some comments from the government side in reference to a certain highway.

Thank you very much. Go.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Isn't it amazing, Speaker—you've sat in this chair for some time now, not some time today but some time over the years—how upset they get when someone wants to talk about what they want to bury and they want to hide and they don't want to talk about. But the people of Ontario need to hear this.

The Attorney General is the one who brought forth this bill. The Attorney General is the one who looks after the court system in this province. The Attorney General knows better.

In the past—and I'm talking about records now—we have had cabinet ministers in the previous government. The minute there was a sniff of an investigation, they stepped aside. Here we have a Premier who won't have a staff member step aside who is under suspicion, under investigation—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): This is your fourth point of order. Go ahead.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know what? If you look at standing order 23(b)(i), I can realize that this member is definitely not speaking about this bill. I would ask your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, to ask this particular member to come back to our wonderful bill that we have moving forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I appreciate the member from Ottawa—Orléans bringing it to my attention for the fourth time. I'm well aware of what the boundaries are. If I feel that they step over the boundaries, they'll hear from me. At this point, he has heard

from me twice and I've tried to ring him in, so to speak. He will go back to the bill right now, won't he?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Absolutely, Speaker. I hope that you will not recognize the member on a point of order again. It's the same thing; we're going to hear it over and over again. It's my time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, it's my time right now, and it's my job to recognize points of order. I don't think you are in the position to limit how many or how I handle that situation. That's my job. You do your job; I'll do my job. Continue.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Very good, Speaker. I was distinctly told here last week that I wouldn't be recognized on a further point of order, but that's—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): That was a different Speaker.

Mr. John Yakabuski: No, actually, it was you, Speaker. It was during the oppo day. So I had that discussion with the member from Mississauga—Streetsville, and I was told I would not be recognized on a further point of order. We can check the Hansard.

Anyway, I'm going to speak on what I believe is necessary to speak on in this House. If someone chooses to interrupt me or if the Speaker chooses to shut me down, I suppose that's his prerogative. But I'm going to stand here in this House, as the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke and a member of this caucus, and I'm going to speak to what I believe is necessary for the people of Ontario. If it is my fate that I am shut down in this chamber of debate, so be it. But until that happens, I'm here for the reasons that I was elected. If someone wants to shoot me down, well, load 'em up boys. Load 'em up. I'm a big target.

Let's talk about the Sudbury bribery scandal. You want to talk about good governance?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Okay, my turn. You're shut down.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, I came here this morning to listen to the opposition speak about my bill. I would have been very interested to hear my dear friend from—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke is now warned.

Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I'm now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there has been more than six and one-half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader specifies otherwise.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Speaker, we wish to continue the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You can't speak again. You've spoken on this, Minister.

Further debate?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I guess I'm a little disillusioned. We had some good debate going here, and I guess the government is a little disappointed with hearing some of the things that are being brought up today.

But I come from a riding where people are disappointed with the governance in this province. I never hear talk about the good governance going on with this Liberal government. It's unfortunate, because Ontario has a lot to be proud of. We've come through a lot of hard times, if you go back through our great history. We're sitting now, a province that really led the country for decades, probably centuries, in a situation where the other provinces are giving back to us because we're a have-not province. Who would ever have thought that? When they took over, things were booming here in Ontario.

1010

When I graduated from school after 17 years of school, friends of mine had wanted to get a little time off, but at that time, if you chose to, you were capable of getting unemployment when you finished university. People were being found jobs and couldn't go on unemployment. What a change we've seen under this government, where now our youth unemployment is double the regular unemployment, which is stubbornly high.

My son had come back to Toronto after a couple of years working in Alberta to find some of his classmates, civil engineers—a good job, good education—still looking for jobs, working in restaurants as waiters. He went out to Alberta and within two days had a job. That used to be Ontario. But I hear small electrical contractors talking about being afraid to hire somebody young in this province because of the labour laws that have been put in place by this government, labour laws that really aren't set up to help young people get a job.

We had a round table with our then-leader Tim Hudak. It's interesting, because I talked to one of our small businesses and I said, "You know, you're going to have to tell people in the community what's going on here." Do you know what his comment was? He said, "You don't understand. We can't talk about this, because under this government's legislation and regulation, we get attacked." It's hard to believe that we've got people in this province who are afraid to say anything because of a situation that they've set up.

We had a round table, and we were going to have the press there—

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It's a culture of fear.

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's a culture of fear. We had a round table with Jim Wilson last fall where we had a number of small agencies in, talking about not having had an increase in funding in five years from this government, who say they do a great job and talk about great governance. They had not received an increase in five years. Jim Wilson said, "How could that be? I hear about all of these great programs—money coming out here, money there." They said, "Yes, we get \$10,000 here; we

lose it over here. We get \$20,000 here; we lose it over here. We just constantly lay off people to cover the costs of energy going up and property taxes."

I asked a question, knowing the answer: "Why aren't we hearing anything? Are you intimidated?" They said, "Absolutely. We're told that if there's a bad story out, we better hear the day before, or else." That's the governance of fear, and that's not good governance. I don't see anything in this bill that talks about that. It's a lot of little things, asking around the ministries if there are any caretaking issues and making a big deal of this.

I talked just a few minutes ago about the bill introduced to stop burning coal in hydroelectricity stations in this province. The bill was issued after we stopped. What is this? Have we nothing else in this province to deal with? Could we not have a bill that actually attacks high energy rates? Where is your bill saying let's do a better job at reducing new regulation?

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Ottawa—Orléans was complaining.

Mr. Jim McDonell: This is a bill that adds more regulation. Where is the bill that gets rid of some of it?

They have an art of issuing bills with great titles. We sat here and they had a bill to reduce regulation in Ontario. The minister of the day stood up saying, "We're doing such a great job," and my colleague on this side stood up with two books, one from 2003 and one from 2014. The first one was 2,000 pages, the second one was 3,600 pages, and they call that reducing regulation?

But it's that saying one thing and doing another that has been very clear from this government. "We will not raise taxes," and within a month, the biggest health tax this province has ever seen. "We will not raise taxes," and the GST comes in, a big increase.

People are getting fed up. I was very proud of the residents of Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry because they were polite. Last year, when we went to the plowing match, there were loud boos at this government. It was embarrassing. The Premier even talked about it on stage. We didn't do that. But there were people turning their backs, people who are very disappointed with what's going on in this province. It's embarrassing when we used to have a province of—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Sorry to interrupt, but the time has elapsed. The member from Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry will continue at a later time with this.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): This House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure today to introduce Joseph Brant and Matan Volach from the polycystic kidney foundation of Canada board of directors. I want to

welcome them to the Ontario Legislature and all guests to the Ontario Legislature today.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to congratulate our page captain today, Matthew Keon Hartford, and welcome his mother, Dr. Yun Yee Chow; his father, Martin Hartford; and his brother Luke Hartford. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Chris Ballard: I'm delighted to welcome a constituent of mine from Newmarket, Jeff Robertson, to Queen's Park today. Jeff is the executive director of the Polycystic Kidney Disease Foundation of Canada. I met with that group today and I was very impressed by all of them. Thank you very much for being here today, Jeff.

Mr. John Yakubuski: On behalf of the PC party, I'd like to welcome our friends at the Ontario Energy Association here with us today. Please join me in welcoming president and CEO Bob Huggard and his team from the OEA.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I ask all members of the House to join me in welcoming Karyn Greenwood-Graham and the Affected Families of Police Homicide, who are in the public gallery today. Thank you very much.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I would like to welcome the grade 5 students and staff from St. Barbara elementary school in my great riding of Mississauga-Brampton South. They are in the west public gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: In the west members' gallery today, we have the grade 5 class from MacLachlan College in Oakville and their teacher, Martha Bonner. Please give them a warm Queen's Park welcome.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'd like to introduce Mary De Sousa, executive vice-president of marketing at FirstOntario Credit Union, in the west members' gallery.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: We have a number of guests in the gallery today who are here for the third reading of Bill 66. We have, from the Earth Rangers, who will be here shortly, a group of children: Tovah Barocas, Amy Cross, Lisa Martin, Metta Martin, Tammara Tucker, Emily Tucker, Darlena Green, Catherine MacLean and Elizabeth MacLean; Mark Mattson from Lake Ontario Waterkeeper; Hilda Swirsky from the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario; Kevin Rich and Jim Pimblett from Ducks Unlimited; Bob Duncanson from the Georgian Bay Association; Mark Fisher from the Council of the Great Lakes Region; Tim Gray and Natalija Fisher from Environmental Defence; and finally, Nancy Goucher from Freshwater Future.

M. Grant Crack: C'est un grand plaisir pour moi de présenter tous mes amis et mes collègues de Glengarry-Prescott-Russell qui sont ici avec nous ce matin pour Glengarry-Prescott-Russell day.

I'd like to welcome all the members who are here today from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell. Glengarry-Prescott-Russell day is in room 248 from 11:30 to 1. I hope everybody comes.

Mr. Harinder S. Takhar: I'd like to introduce Dalbir Singh Sidhu and Satinder Kaur Sidhu. Dalbir is a good friend and a great supporter as well.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to introduce Mary De Sousa from FirstOntario Credit Union in the Hamilton area.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I just wanted to welcome our friends from the Polycystic Kidney Disease Foundation of Canada. They're doing wonderful work, raising awareness and finding funds to find a cure. We've got Joseph Brant, who's the chair; Jeff Robertson, the executive director; and Matan Volach. Welcome, all.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order, the member from Nepean-Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure today to rise, with the unanimous consent I believe we have from all parties to wear PKD awareness—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before we get into a shouting match, can I please hear the point of order?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I believed that there had been unanimous consent to wear the green ribbon for PKD awareness. Perhaps the government didn't get the memo, but now I think they do, so we'll all wear this beautiful green ribbon.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean-Carleton is seeking unanimous consent to wear the pins. Do we agree? Agreed.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health. Doctors and patients are outraged by the Liberal cuts to health care. We've heard many stories across the province of how this is affecting patient care. I'll share another today. We heard from Dr. Verbora, a recent graduate who, with his MBA degree, invested 11 years of his life and \$250,000 to become a family doctor. He is frustrated with the Liberal government's attempt to limit the number of doctors who can join family health teams. Does the minister believe this is the right message to send to Ontario's new doctors?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question from the leader of the official opposition.

Mr. Speaker, we've made changes to our primary health care system, including focusing on those underserved areas—places in the north, rural and small-town Ontario—that are lacking family physicians or in particular are lacking the family health team approach to providing health care, which is an approach—I think we all agree; the comprehensive nature of that care is very amenable to quality of care, and it's a kind of service that patients really appreciate.

What we've done is we've actually encouraged and incentivized our new grads, as well as existing family doctors that aren't currently part of a family health team, to go to those rural and small-town parts of this province,

to go to northern Ontario to open up those family health teams. I would hope that that's something the leader of the opposition could support.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again for the Minister of Health: Only this Liberal government could try to sell an \$800-million cut to health care as a good thing.

Let's go back to the story of that new doctor, Dr. Verbora. This new doctor must see an average of six to seven patients per hour just to pay the overhead expenses, including rent, fees and insurance. After completing paperwork, Dr. Verbora will be left with three to four minutes of face-to-face time with each patient.

Mr. Speaker, a four-minute visit with a patient isn't adequate for quality health care in Ontario. Why does this minister seem to think it's okay to justify these cuts with more and more spin?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I would agree that a three- to four-minute visit isn't sufficient. I, in fact, would argue that this particular methodology of practising medicine isn't the norm in this province. Our family health doctors, our family medicine practitioners—our nurse practitioners, for that matter, and the other front-line health care professionals—do provide the highest quality of service, and in the case of our physicians that's why they're the best paid in Canada. On average, they're remunerated \$368,000. I understand that there are expenses associated with that that range from as low as 0% overhead—for example, our ER docs or those that practise in hospitals—to a higher amount that may be 30% or so in terms of those overhead costs. But our doctors remain and will remain the highest paid in this country—I would say probably in North America, in fact. That's part of the reason why so many new doctors are coming here. We have 700 new doctors that practise—net new doctors—each year in this province.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, back to the health minister: It may be little stories like the one we just shared with Dr. Verbora, but the Ontario PC caucus will continue to tell the stories of Ontario doctors because the stories of Ontario doctors are the stories of Ontario patients. These are patients who, because of the Liberal government, will have to wait longer for their emerg visit. They'll have to wait longer for their first appointment with an oncologist after learning they have cancer. Why? Because it's more important for this Liberal government to spend \$1 billion on eHealth than on quality health care. It's more important for this government to waste \$1 billion on Ornge than investing and making sure Ontarians have access to a doctor.

Mr. Speaker, my question for the minister is: What counts for this government? Doesn't it matter that Ontarians deserve to have access to health care, and can't you accept the fact that an \$800-million cut is wrong?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: The only cut to health care in this province has come from the federal government, a gov-

ernment that that member was part of. That \$800 million he's talking about is the annual cut in health care to this province from the federal Conservative government each year for the next 10 years.

We continue to invest in health care. Our health care budget goes up from year to year, and I—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I'd like the member opposite to explain, with our doctors being the best paid in this country, how that could possibly affect—and this is only about compensation—quality of care or access to care. We'll continue to pay our physicians for every service they provide. That won't change. They're the best paid in the country.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Minister of Energy. This Liberal government is the only government in the history of Ontario that's had to sell one of its best crown assets in order to pay for infrastructure. This Liberal government isn't being straight with Ontario when they say this is required to pay for infrastructure.

On the energy file alone, if you look at the mispending, if you look at the mismanagement—\$1.1 billion on the gas plant scandal, \$1.1 billion exporting power to other jurisdictions this year alone, \$2 billion on smart meters, \$83 million on misbillings because of Hydro One errors. That's \$4.3 billion on the energy file alone because of your own mismanagement.

Will the Minister of Energy accept that if it wasn't for their own incompetence, you wouldn't need to do this fire sale?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds—Grenville.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The member opposite is indicating a number of expenditures that we have made. We have made very significant expenditures in the electricity sector, starting—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Having that advice is not helpful, either.

The member from Nipissing, come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Oh, I have a long memory.

Carry on.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: It was scandalous what we found when we took over government, the state of the electricity system. There had been a decline in generation. There had been a decline in transmission. We were in a deficit of supply. We were importing \$1 billion a year from the US and rates were skyrocketing. It was a dirty system—25%—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Simcoe-Grey, come to order.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —and we had to rebuild the system.

In the supplementary, I will tell the new member to the provincial chamber of the investments that we've been making in the last nine years to make the system reliable.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the energy minister: Soaring energy rates aren't just because of these endless scandals. It's the government's day-to-day mismanagement of the energy file. In the last three years alone, we have lost roughly \$3.5 billion exporting power to other jurisdictions. That's almost as much as they'll make on the fire sale of Hydro One. They've already charged Ontario taxpayers \$6 billion this year alone for global adjustment taxes, and, by the way, that global adjustment tax the Auditor General said is there just to pay for this government's expensive renewable energy contracts.

Anyone who mismanages a company this badly would be fired.

So my question is: Will the minister finally admit that this decision to fire-sale Hydro One is because of their own incompetence?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, come to order. I'm inches away from moving to warnings, so take that under advisement. It'll happen.

Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I appreciate the question on the global adjustment. It's been raised in estimates as well by colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, before the global adjustment, wholesale market prices were insufficient to cover the costs of contract payments to certain electricity generators, leading the former PC government to accumulate billions of dollars in debt. This contributed to the stranded debt that consumers continue to pay off through the debt retirement charge.

That government bankrupted the old Ontario Hydro. They had to create the debt retirement—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Oxford is warned. Anyone else?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: They kept prices artificially low because they did not include all the costs to the system.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Stormont is warned.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The global adjustment reflects costs associated with contracted and regulated generation such as nuclear, natural gas and renewables, as well as the cost of conservation programs.

In the next supplementary, I want to talk about their statements about Ontario having the most expensive electricity in North America, which is wrong—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm standing. I haven't acknowledged you yet.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the energy minister: We already know that the minister personally objects to the sale of Hydro One—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Barrie is warned.

Mr. Patrick Brown: —along with the Attorney General, along with the minister for seniors and the deputy House leader. This minister has the opportunity to do the right thing. This is his chance; this is his file. The minister is responsible for the people's Hydro One—well, it's still the people's for now. We know the minister thinks this is a bad deal. He said so unequivocally when he was mayor of Ottawa.

My question is, will the Minister of Energy show he has some integrity, show he has the courage of his convictions—go to your Premier and say what you believe in your heart and what you've said on the public record: that this is a bad deal for Ontario?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I'm going to present an impartial opinion—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean-Carleton is warned.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —of the Hydro One initiative. It's from the Globe and Mail. It says:

"At a media briefing ... the IPO's top financial and legal advisers addressed the press gallery, allotting time afterward to address substantive concerns about the country's largest privatization in years.

"Despite filing a 322-page prospectus chock full of colour on strategy and the market's appetite for utilities, they fielded incessant, angry questions about executive pay....

"Premier Kathleen Wynne was re-elected last fall with a mandate to reinvest in the province, particularly through transit and infrastructure projects that are expected to fuel growth....

"Much respect to the Premier for embracing such a difficult choice.

"The Liberals—advised by Mr. Clark" and other experts—have "persuaded Bay Street to accept some of the lowest IPO"—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward-Hastings is warned.
New question.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. The Liberal government is desperately trying to justify their sell-off of Hydro One to Ontarians. They want us all to believe that they had no choice but to privatize our hydro. The truth is, they had better and smarter choices, like asking our biggest corporations to pay just a little bit more to help tackle the cost of congestion by investing in transit and roads. But they refused to make a better decision for Ontario.

When will the Liberals admit that they prefer privatization over every single smart and progressive option to fund the infrastructure that we need?

1050

Hon. Charles Sousa: I read intently the nine-page platform put forward by the NDP during their election.

Interjection: Nine pages?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Nine pages. It was very thorough. Of course, they assumed every fiscal assumption that we put in our budget and in our platform. I recall when she said this on Newstalk 1010: "There's no doubt we did talk in our platform about looking at some of the ... assets that the province owns," and looking also at ways to provide the funding necessary to support infrastructure and investments in our province. That's what we said we would do. That's what we're doing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier's sell-off of our most important public asset would only provide the equivalent of \$400 million per year. The Golden report shows that a 1% increase in corporate taxes will yield \$700 million per year. More than 80% of Ontarians oppose the sell-off of Hydro One—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of the Environment is warned.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: —but a significant majority of Ontarians are in favour of modest corporate tax increases.

This Premier and this finance minister think they know better than Ontarians. When will the Liberals admit that they are rejecting better choices in favour of privatization?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The member opposite obviously doesn't wish to broaden the ownership of our assets to reinvest in other assets to provide greater prosperity and economic stimulus. I get that. She doesn't want investment in infrastructure and she wants to raise taxes to our businesses, which are struggling to rebound as well.

Part of our platform is to invest in our skills and training, invest in infrastructure over the next 10 years to bring Ontario to a place where it can be more competitive and also be very competitive for our businesses so that they can attract greater investment. That is why we have become the top destination in all of North America for

foreign direct investment. It is why businesses in Ontario are surpassing businesses elsewhere in North America by investing in the things that matter, that create real jobs, jobs that are sustainable, jobs that will help families support their families and their children.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: There's no need for the province of Ontario to have a corporate tax rate lower than that of Alabama—no need. The Premier and the Liberals have simply run out of excuses. They have no way to defend the sale of Hydro One and maintain any credibility whatsoever.

The fact is that they had a choice. The Premier had a choice. This finance minister had a choice. They could have chosen to ask the most profitable corporations to pay just a little bit more to build the transit and infrastructure that we so desperately need. But instead, they deliberately chose to hand Hydro One to their powerful friends on Bay Street.

When will the Liberals finally admit that they chose privatization over every other option available and that Ontarians will pay the price for this bad choice for generations to come?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs is warned.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Yes, indeed, there are choices to be made—some difficult choices. But by far the most important choice of all is the creation of more jobs. More than 100,000 new jobs were created last year because of our supports to businesses.

The member opposite talks about supporting those most in need. What we put in this plan was also an increase to the minimum wage, which—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Kitchener-Waterloo is warned.

Hon. Charles Sousa: —has an effect on business. She voted against that. She's voting against trying to create more support for business, voting against those who are looking for better wages, and supporting those who want to invest in our economy. That's what we support. That's what's going to create a much greater, stronger economy for Ontario and ultimately for Canada as well.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE AGREEMENT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Acting Premier. The Trans-Pacific Partnership makes it much easier for foreign producers to import vehicles and parts, while reducing incentives for companies like Toyota and Honda to make products here in Canada. The TPP could kill a quarter of Canada's existing—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Transportation is warned.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: —auto manufacturing jobs. That's nearly 25,000 Ontario families that will be affected. But aside from "figuring out where there needs to be compensatory action," the Premier is happy to let this deal plow ahead.

Will this Liberal government stand up for Ontario's automotive sector and the good-paying jobs that it actually provides and refuse to endorse this deal until it is fixed?

Hon. Charles Sousa: This is the only government that stood up for auto. This is the government that was there when auto needed us most. We stood there alongside, the only subnational jurisdiction in the world to support the auto industry.

I appreciate the members opposite for asking the Mulcair question; right? They don't even know what's in the deal. We want to make certain that we review it, assess it and ensure that we protect the interests of Ontarians

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier of this province has taken every opportunity to pick fights with Stephen Harper. But suddenly, she's willing to go along with a massive secret trade deal that he has cooked up behind closed doors so that she can march in lockstep with her federal leader. The Sierra Club says that, if passed, the TPP would "undermine decades of environmental progress and threaten our climate."

Why do Liberals and the Premier suddenly trust Stephen Harper's leadership on trade when the TPP could undermine efforts to address climate change here in Ontario and across Canada?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We want to seize opportunities, the greatest amount of opportunities that exist in the province of Ontario, with trade around the world. I think we all recognize how important that is for ourselves to be able to take advantage of the markets elsewhere. We certainly can't rely on our market alone.

Now, the member opposite may want to stick her head in the sand and put walls around the country and avoid looking over the pond, but we must look at what's happening elsewhere. We also must recognize that the United States—and she may want to hide behind the United States—is making a tremendous amount of negotiations that will proceed with or without Ontario and without Canada. We must protect Ontarians, protect our dairy, protect our auto, and we will do so—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Just say you're endorsing Stephen Harper.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew is warned.

Hon. Charles Sousa: —after we review and assess the details as they move forward. We're not going to make decisions when neither the NDP nor anybody else in this Legislature knows the full extent of what has happened.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, it's kind of odd not knowing the full extent of what's in that deal and the Premier blindly supporting it in order to support her federal leader. Ontario has already lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs to low-wage jurisdictions like Mexico and the southern US, and now, with the TPP, there will be even more downward pressure on middle-class incomes.

The former US Secretary of Labor called the TPP "a Trojan Horse in a global race to the bottom." No one is denying the need for trade, but this secret Conservative plan is badly flawed. The livelihoods of middle-class Ontarians, which we should be protecting, are at stake.

Will the Liberals and the Premier blindly join Harper's race to the bottom or will they stand up for good-paying jobs for Ontario families?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Who is blind is the member of the third party and Mr. Mulcair, because they don't know the details of the TPP. None of us do. So they're asking us now to make a decision, being blinded. We don't want to be blind. We want to make certain we understand what's in it and then make the appropriate decision.

WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Speaker, this minister likes to say that motorist safety is one of his top priorities. Yet, one year after we saw the QEW transform into a treacherous, unplowed ice rink, he has still yet to actually deal with the situation. In fact, while the minister boasts of \$500,000 in fines for the November nightmare, those fines are still under negotiation a year later.

Now the minister spins and spins, rewarding contractors with new equipment that government failed to ensure was on hand when they awarded the substandard contracts in the first place. In the meantime, the cost-cutting winter maintenance contracts government introduced in 2009 continue to place lives at risk.

Will the minister tell us why it has taken an entire year to deal with this situation?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I appreciate the question coming from the member opposite. That member would know, as I've said repeatedly in this House, he is 100% right. In fact, ensuring that Ontario's roads and highways remain as safe as they have been for the last 13 years is one of my top priorities. In fact, as was noted in the auditor's report earlier this year, Ontario's roads and highways have been ranked first or second across all North American jurisdictions over those last 13 years.

1100

That doesn't mean we rest on our laurels. Of course, the auditor did have eight recommendations with respect to the winter maintenance program, and we've accepted all eight of those recommendations. We have a plan to go forward for the upcoming winter season, which is what I'm focused on, to make sure that we provide an outcome for the people of Ontario that they expect and that they deserve.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: Speaker, back to the minister: One year later, as the minister ignored substandard winter maintenance contracts that led to tragic fatalities, he continues to spin fine announcements that aren't even worth the paper that they're written on. No amount of fines can make up for the tragic toll this government's compromised contracting has taken.

But yesterday, the minister didn't even know if the contractor would actually be paying the penalties he's levied. It seems, when the government watered down contract standards in 2009 to save a few bucks, they included a bizarre dispute process that renders the fine system virtually useless. In fact, according to the auditor, that process led to 80% of the fines levied in 2013 not even being collected.

Will the minister tell us today the amount of fines levied last winter and how much did he actually collect?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: As I've said on many occasions, any time there is a fatality or an injury on Ontario's highways, my heart goes out to the friends and family of those affected.

This member opposite will know that over the course of the last number of months, the ministry has worked very hard to come forward with a plan that will provide that outcome that I referenced in answer to the first question, including, for the upcoming winter season and for future winter seasons, a strongly improved Ontario 511 website. We're launching a new program known as Track My Plow as pilots, both in the Owen Sound and Simcoe areas, with plans for further expansion. We're increasing the use of anti-icing liquids before winter storms. We're adding more equipment in key—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In case the members didn't catch on, interjections will get you a warning.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Thank you, Speaker. We continue to work with contractors to ensure that they have both reliable equipment and trained operators.

My responsibility as the minister is to make sure that our highways remain safe, and I'm focused on this coming winter season and those to come in the future.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE AGREEMENT

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question today is to the Acting Premier. This week, it was announced that the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement was signed. The agreement is going to be bad for rural communities, bad for manufacturing, bad for our health care costs and very bad for the auto sector. It's good to see at least one federal leader is standing up and opposing the deal, and hopefully your party will have the courage—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please put the question.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you. Acting Premier, with this deal looming on the horizon, what is this government going to do to protect good jobs in manufacturing and the

auto sector that so many people in Niagara, Oshawa, the GTA, Brampton and Windsor rely on?

Hon. Charles Sousa: What is courageous is for people to make a decision with information in hand. What is discouraging is when people, for political reasons, are making decisions without information. What we don't want to do is put Ontario at risk.

We have concerns. We've made that very clear when it comes to dairy farmers, especially when it comes to auto. We recognize that we must take mitigation and steps to ensure a sustainable industry in our province. We will continue to fight for Ontario, as we did when the auto industry required us. We were there. We'll continue to be there. We must do everything possible to support our workers and support our economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Wayne Gates: The Acting Premier can talk all he wants about an auto strategy and about helping manufacturers, but actions speak louder than words, and we haven't seen that action.

The government won't accept the job creator's tax credit we put forward, and your reckless privatization of Hydro One is only going to add more pressure on these companies and the jobs they provide.

Jerry Dias, the president of Unifor, who I believe would know what's most important, has said that more than 20,000 Canadians will lose their jobs because of this. Niagara, Oshawa and Windsor are going to be some of the hardest-hit communities.

What will this government do to help people from manufacturing plants in Niagara and right across the province get back to work after this trade agreement is done?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Beaches—East York is warned.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, the province of Ontario—the only subnational government in the world—participated in a support for the auto sector. We have provided economic development funds to attract greater investments in the auto sector in the province of Ontario. We put forward in a budget \$2.5 billion in a Jobs and Prosperity Fund to support business investment, especially in the auto industry. And guess what, Mr. Speaker? That party turned its back on the province of Ontario and voted against those very measures to support the auto industry. And now they have the audacity to suggest that they should make a blind decision without review? That, sir, is what is inappropriate.

NORTHERN HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: My question this morning is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Our government's 2015 budget is one that I am particularly proud of. We are delivering on our commitment to follow the path to balance. In the 2014 budget, we introduced the province's economic plan, and now, in the

2015 budget, we have demonstrated the significant progress that has been made on our plan to date.

Job creation and economic development is a key part of our plan for building Ontario up. Just last week, I was proud to announce \$69 million in funding for highways in northeastern Ontario, including rehabilitation on Highway 69 and expansion of Highway 17.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, can the minister please explain how we are investing in northern infrastructure?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I thank the member for Sudbury, one of the strongest advocates for infrastructure work, all across the province, but certainly in northern Ontario.

As referenced, in our 2015 budget, our government made the largest investment commitment in infrastructure in the province's history: \$130 billion over 10 years. In 2015, our planned investments of \$11.9 billion are driving extraordinarily important infrastructure projects, including continuing very important highway work in northern Ontario. Through the northern highways program, which comes to our ministry, we are committing over \$560 million this year: \$387 million for rehabilitation and \$173 million for expansion projects. That, of course, maintains our very strong commitment and priority on four-laning major highway corridors in northern Ontario, including Highway 11/17 between Thunder Bay and Nipigon, which we will complete, and also Highway 69 between Parry Sound and Sudbury. They're very important projects.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: I would like to thank the Minister of Northern Development and Mines for that answer.

We believe that when we are investing, we are building, and when we are building, we are growing. Our government is supporting a dynamic and innovative business climate across the province, Mr. Speaker, while the federal government is certainly not investing to the extent that Ontarians expect and need, particularly in small, rural and northern communities.

Just last month, I was proud to join the minister in announcing that nine kilometres of four-laning of Highway 69 is now in service between Highway 64 and the Murdock River. Since 2003, the province has invested more than \$770 million to expand and improve a total of 59 kilometres of Highway 69. This ambitious highway expansion is vital to promote future economic growth in northeastern Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister please explain some of the progress we have made this summer in northern Ontario?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thanks again to the member for Sudbury. Certainly, it is about economic development and how important these projects are, but it's also about safety. We understand, as northerners, how important it is to have a safe driving experience, and these improved roads mean exactly that.

One of the great stories over the last 10 years is the amount of investment we've actually put through the northern highways program into northern highways, which is more than \$5 billion over the last 10 years. It references projects such as the one the member has referenced, as well as many others we've been very happy to make.

When you look at the Thunder Bay to Nipigon story, a project that really started in 2010, hundreds of millions of dollars have been invested in that four-laning project, which will indeed be an economic boon to the area, and will also very much improve driver safety. In terms of that project, more than half of that particular stretch between Thunder Bay and Nipigon is now absolutely complete or it's under way, and we're going to make sure we drive through to the end, so—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

1110

STUDENT SAFETY

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Minister of Education. For the past 48 hours, my inbox and the phone calls to my office have been very much focused on the lack of security systems in place at the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board elementary schools. More than anything, though, I'm concerned about the children, not only their safety but how they're reacting to this. In fact, my own 10-year-old daughter this morning told me she was having lockdown practice today in a school that no longer locks. This is ongoing not only in Ottawa but, as you know, also in Halton.

When the former Liberal leader—and when you were a parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education, you increased the school safety supports in 2012 in the wake of the Sandy Hook shooting. It was also during labour strife, but it had widespread support. Now, three years later, student safety has been reduced to a bargaining chip.

I want to know, are you going to fix this before Thanksgiving weekend?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Speaker, we obviously share their concern about the safety of the children in the schools. Certainly we agree that it has been a big concern for parents to make sure that their children are safe in their schools.

I did call on the president of OSSTF to rethink that part of the strike action that they are taking, with respect to the monitoring of the buzzers and the screens and making sure that we have safe access to schools and safe entry to schools. We are absolutely working on that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Minister, that's not enough. Yesterday, in a neighbouring community to mine, in Kemptville, where the member for Leeds-Grenville is the MPP, there was a man wielding a knife outside of three schools, which went into lockdown. Their school board isn't

affected; the kids that I represent are. They're expecting more from our government.

These kids in elementary schools in eastern Ontario and the rest of Ontario have been going through labour strife since 2012 with Bill 115. This is ongoing for three years, and now they are fearing for their basic safety in the nation's capital.

I am asking the government to take this seriously. I would ask the government to ensure that before the kids in my constituency and elsewhere in this province go back to school tomorrow and for the Thanksgiving weekend, you resolve this issue.

I do understand that you've called upon the president of OSSTF. I actually went one step further and had the conversation and asked directly. You need to do the same. Will you do it?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Liz Sandals: We have certainly been in touch with the directors each day in terms of how they are handling this situation, what protocols they have put in place, and obviously, the directors are reporting back to us on the steps that they are taking to secure the schools.

But I must challenge some of what the member opposite is saying. What she has reported accurately during her questions is (1) that lockdown drills are continuing, as they always do at this time of the school year, and (2) that when there was an actual threat to safety, the lockdown procedures were immediately implemented by the schools in question to ensure the safety of the children. So I think she needs to actually listen to her own question that when there is an imminent threat, that threat is dealt with—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: We should just scare children? That's what we should do? Just frighten them; that's what they're doing. But you don't have a kid in school, so you wouldn't know.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. Order. The member for Nepean—Carleton is named.

Ms. MacLeod was escorted from the chamber.

Mr. Todd Smith: Wow, that's pretty sad. Double standard, Speaker; come on. That's pretty sad.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member is seeking himself to be removed?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Education is warned.

New question.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. When it comes to post-secondary education, this government has no problem allowing tuition fees to skyrocket, no problem with

poverty wages for teaching assistants and no problem replacing full-time jobs with contract staff, but it is not willing to hold the line on executive compensation.

Earlier, I raised the issue of the million-dollar salary legally paid to the president of Western University. Now we are learning about a 50% salary increase for a University of Ottawa VP over the two years since the public-sector wage freeze took effect. Allan Rock, the university president and former Liberal cabinet minister, is defending the increase, saying that it is compliant with provincial law.

Why is this government refusing to take real action to rein in the salaries of senior university administrators?

Hon. Reza Moridi: I want to thank the member opposite for the question. I understand why people are frustrated. Ontarians deserve to know why executives are paid and what they are paid. That's why we brought in the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act. Based on that act, we are going to put caps on the salaries; we're also going to prohibit pay in lieu of leave.

I recently wrote a letter to the chair of the board of governors and executive heads of all universities and colleges across the province of Ontario letting them know that we will be collecting information about the salaries, health benefits and other benefits which executives receive from the institutions.

We are going to look at the work that people in other jurisdictions do, as well as putting a cap on the salaries of executives. We are not going to do this on an individual basis; we are going to take a very close look at what's happening in other jurisdictions and make sure that—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Ontario university students pay the highest tuition fees in Canada; they have seen tuition more than triple over the past 20 years. Post-secondary students are among the fastest-growing group of food bank users—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Trinity—Spadina is warned.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: —while student tuition dollars are being used to subsidize out-of-control executive salaries. The government talks about compensation frameworks, but what we need are hard caps that work.

When will the minister close the loopholes, remove the wiggle room and finally put a hard cap on salaries for senior university administrators?

Hon. Reza Moridi: Again, I want to thank the member opposite for that question. As I said, Ontarians deserve to know why executives are paid and how much they are paid. We are aware of the situation at the University of Ottawa. I've been in touch with the university. It's not uncommon for the university administrators, those who are working in research and education, to get raises in their respective work, and we are actually encouraging the administration to continue their academic activities as well.

With regard to student tuition fees, Ontario is one of the lowest in the country when it comes to student tuition fees. The student debt has been decreased for over a number years. Some 70% of the fees which students pay are grants—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Reza Moridi: —non-payable grants.

We are so proud of our academic institutions. Two of our university professors won the Nobel prize yesterday and—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I will remind the minister, when I stand, you sit.

New question.

CONDOMINIUM LEGISLATION

Mr. Han Dong: My question is to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. In the past weeks, members of this Legislative Assembly have debated the proposed Bill 106, the Protecting Condominium Owners Act. They have brought forward important priorities from their constituents like transparent board governance, accountable use of fees, extensive warranty coverage, professionally certified management and timely, cost-effective, dispute resolution.

Right now, 1.3 million Ontarians live in condos. In my riding, vibrant communities such as CityPlace, Fort York and Liberty Village are home to many young professionals and condo owners. As the existing Condominium Act has not been updated for nearly 20 years, it is these communities that need these changes the most. This proposed legislation has the potential to modernize condo law in these areas and provide condo owners with the protection they need.

Minister, could you please inform this House why it is so important for us to pass this bill?

1120

Hon. David Oraziatti: First of all, I want to thank the member from Trinity–Spadina for his question and for his tireless advocacy on behalf of the thousands of condo owners in his riding.

Our government understands the need for condominium owners to have important protections. Our party was the only one that spoke to this issue during the last election campaign. The proposed legislation reflects 18 months of consultations directed toward ensuring that this proposal meets the new standards that we're aiming to put in place.

In the 18-month consultation period, we received over 2,200 submissions from residents, developers, property managers, agents and other members of the public, as well as advocacy associations to protect condo owners. We reiterated this commitment to modernizing the Condominium Act in our 2015 budget by introducing Bill 106 last spring. The bill was significantly influenced by condo owner organizations, and I hope that all members will support this legislation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Han Dong: I would like to thank the minister for this informative response, and his ministry for its hard work on this very important issue.

I personally know that it is a crucial issue in Trinity–Spadina. Downtown living is at a premium, and it is important that we protect the rights and investments of our condo owners.

One of the benefits of this proposed legislation is that it will enable the creation of two new delegated administrative authorities. One will license condo managers and the other will provide a modern, cost-effective dispute resolution system. These are both very important functions for condominium owners. For them to best meet the needs of Ontarians, it is important that these organizations are accountable.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Can the minister explain what mechanisms have been proposed in this legislation to ensure that these DAAs are subject to proper oversight?

Hon. David Oraziatti: Again to the member from Trinity–Spadina: The creation of two new delegated administrative authorities will be critical to adding accountability to the sector. As the member stated, these organizations will have added accountability and oversight. That's why, for the first time, the proposed authorities will be subject to salary disclosure, accountability agreements and Auditor General oversight. As organizations outside government, we're also taking steps to make them compliant with a process similar to FIPPA inside government.

Speaker, the administrative authority's model has a foundation of providing consumer protection in Ontario for over 15 years, and its continued use was a key recommendation put forth in the 2013 Drummond report.

We'll continue to work to ensure that these proposed administrative authorities and other authorities are overseen by our ministry and meet the high standard of consumer protection that this government is setting in Ontario.

I look forward to seeing this bill hopefully move to committee, and I want to thank the member for his efforts.

WATER EXTRACTION

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is for the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. Will the minister explain the process that the ministry uses to consider applications for permits to take water on a large scale? What assurances can he offer this House that the process adequately ensures the long-term protection of the quality and quantity of the groundwater in adjacent areas?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: First of all, I do want to recognize the member for Wellington–Halton Hills because we've been working very closely together on some matters that are not just particular to his constituents and some municipalities but concerns across that. I do say that he has taken such a very non-partisan and statesman-like role in this, and I greatly respect the honourable member.

As the member knows and I think members in this House know, we have some constitutional differences in Canada. In western Canada, provinces own the water, which allows them to manage and control and price water, unlike Ontario and the eastern provinces, where the water is held and lent by people on the land, which means that protecting municipal water supplies is much more complex here. Our water-permitting process works on the volume of water being extracted, which provides some protection but not sufficient. That's the limitation we're working on and trying to find better solutions to.

In the supplementary, I'll continue the conversation with the honourable member.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Arnott: Mr. Speaker, Nestlé Waters, a water-bottling company, says it's considering the purchase of a property in the township of Centre Wellington, with a plan to draw large quantities of water as a backup to its existing wells near Aberfoyle and Hillsburgh. The township council and local residents have expressed interest and concern, and township representatives and I met with the minister last week to discuss the relevant issues.

Will the minister assure my constituents that any permit to take water applications by Nestlé Waters will be subject to a thorough scientific, hydrogeological review, with an open process for public comment by interested residents, taking into account the planned population growth in Centre Wellington because of the government's Places to Grow policy, recognizing the water needs of agriculture, and guaranteeing the protection and preservation of the quality and quantity of groundwater in our communities for present and future generations?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: We share, I know, with the honourable member some serious concerns, particularly in Aberfoyle, where we have 27 monitored wells. When water tables have dropped, when the water levels have dropped, we've actually had to shut some of them down. So we're being particularly mindful about the Nestlé situation, as to what it would mean to the protection of local water supply. I want to thank the member opposite.

I also want to thank the Minister of Education, the member for Guelph, who keeps me abreast of these as well as you do.

We have been meeting, and we met together with the honourable member and municipal leaders, and I think we've crafted a reasonable plan going forward, which I know the member has been supportive of, and I will be accountable to him and to the community to ensure that that is fully realized. We want to protect jobs in the community, but not at the expense of our environment, and in this case, with the honourable member's leadership and the co-operation and support of, I also want to recognize, the member for Guelph, I think we're going to do this and get an economic win and an environmental win, which I think is the desire of the honourable member.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Paul Miller: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Acting Premier. Today, the court overseeing the creditor

protection process is expected to grant US Steel its demand—and it is a demand—to stop paying post-employment benefits to 20,000 pensioners and their families. That's health benefits, medical benefits, dental benefits and life insurance. These are not handouts. These are deferred wages, gone just like that, to line pocketbooks in Pittsburgh.

These pensioners gave 30 to 40 years to the Stelco plants, bought by US Steel on a promise that they would not do this. This work takes a toll on the people who undertake it. It's hard, hot work that breaks down your body. For many of these retirees, US Steel's callous cuts may be a death sentence.

US Steel is washing its hands of the thousands of pensioners whose health was ruined by these steel plants, and there's no safety net to protect them. What will this government do to hold US Steel accountable?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, this is a very important question. The member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek has long advocated—and I give him credit for standing up for the people of Hamilton and those workers.

We have before us a number of motions being put before the courts that will put in jeopardy the livelihood and the going concern of US Steel Canada, which will affect over 12,000 retirees, 4,000 workers, and puts them at risk. We have been at the table, and we'll continue to do so, recognizing that more needs to be done to support them.

I know that it's before the courts; I know things are fluid and they're ongoing, but I've been disappointed in terms of what has happened thus far, and we will work hard to ensure we protect the interests of our retirees and our workers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'm glad you said that, Minister, because there are 150 steelworkers in this building, as we speak.

It's hard to believe, but it only gets worse. US Steel is also expected to succeed in their demand to no longer pay municipal taxes to the city of Hamilton. That's \$6 million a year to local coffers that goes to pay for schools, paved roads and other things. It's hard to think how this won't end up being a provincial problem, with a provincial price tag—and a large one.

Speaker, everything has been too little, too late, and the federal Conservative government has done absolutely nothing to help these people. They sold out. They knuckled under. They are a disgrace.

Will this government stand up for the pensioners, stand up to this corporation and hold US Steel accountable for what it's doing to my city of Hamilton and to the people of this province? We must do something now.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, and to all those watching who are being affected, we wholeheartedly agree that things must be done to support them.

1130

But let me remind the NDP, it was they who actually passed legislation to suggest that they're too big to fail, when it comes to certain corporations. We eliminated that protection. We know that every company, every corporation, must be accountable to the people who work for them. We will do everything, working across time—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. My resolve has not changed.

Carry on.

Hon. Charles Sousa: We will do everything we can to stand with those who are affected: the retirees as well as the employees.

I'm disappointed by the lack of leadership from the federal level, which has hidden behind all of these initiatives. We will stand with them. We'll work together with the member from Stoney Creek, who has been doing an admirable job in fighting for his brothers and sisters. He is a member of the union as well. We recognize that that is important. We are there with you as well.

SENIOR CITIZENS

Ms. Harinder Malhi: My question is for the minister responsible for seniors' affairs. October 1 is recognized in Canada as National Seniors Day, and by the United Nations as the International Day of Older Persons.

This year, in celebration of National Seniors Day, I had the great pleasure of hosting the minister in my community to discuss and observe ways in which the Ontario government is helping Brampton seniors stay active and connected.

On this occasion, the Free For All Foundation from my riding of Brampton–Springdale launched their Seniors Steps program. This program strives to increase healthy outcomes and social involvement while decreasing isolation for hundreds of seniors in Brampton. This beneficial program is being made possible in my community because of funding through the Seniors Community Grant Program.

As we mark another National Seniors Day, can the minister provide us with an update of this grant and on how we are helping seniors remain engaged in their communities?

Hon. Mario Sergio: Thanks to the member for the question. I want to thank her for her very deep passion with respect to the seniors whom she represents in Brampton–Springdale.

I was very proud to start National Seniors Day at the opening of our province's new Humber River Hospital. It is North America's first fully digital hospital, and I know it will serve a vast number of seniors in Ontario.

Continuing with the celebration of National Seniors Day, I thoroughly enjoyed visiting the riding of Brampton–Springdale, the member's riding there, and I could see first-hand the impact that the seniors community grant is having on seniors' communities.

Speaker, I walked into the room, I joined the seniors there in Zumba exercises, and I had a lovely cooking class as well.

I have to say that in the last two years, we invested over \$3 million supporting 116,000 seniors across the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Harinder Malhi: Thank you, Minister, for the answer.

With over 75 seniors in Brampton on National Seniors Day, I experienced the tremendous success of Seniors Community Grant Program funding in action. I saw the energy the seniors displayed and how happy they were in sharing and enjoying activities with the minister and me, including a Zumba fitness demonstration, a discussion of seniors' safety and a healthy cooking class.

It is clear that as a government, we are aware that keeping seniors connected, active and engaged contributes to their overall health and well-being.

Last week, data released by Stats Canada confirmed that for the first time in our nation's history, there are now more Canadians over the age of 65 than there are children under the age of 14. These numbers highlight a trend seen around the world. Older adults, particularly those in Ontario, are living longer than before. Can the minister elaborate on how Ontario is addressing this change?

Hon. Mario Sergio: Again, thanks to the member. To help meet the challenges posed by an aging population, in 2010 we launched Ontario's Action Plan for Seniors. National Seniors Day is a time to honour seniors for their lifetime of contribution, but also it's to reflect on how we can ensure they remain healthy, safe and supported.

In 2015, the Global AgeWatch Index named Canada the fifth best place in the world to age in. Our goal is to do even better and to make Ontario the best place to grow old, indeed. And we have started. Ontario is the first province to introduce strategies to combat elder abuse, the first province to introduce a grant designed specifically to combat social isolation and it's the first province to introduce mandatory sprinklers in retirement homes.

We always think of our seniors first.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is to the Acting Premier. When questioned about the corruption scandal coming from the Premier's corner office, the Premier's new habit seems to be passing the buck to the government House leader. It appears the Premier has given him new talking points and tells him to answer every question by either citing a Supreme Court convention or a parliamentary convention that he can't comment on the case before the courts.

If it was so important for the government to follow this convention, why did the Premier hold a press conference to proclaim Pat Sorbara's innocence in February?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Deputy Premier?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I know the member from Leeds–Grenville is really disappointed that he has to hear the answer again, where I'm going to remind him yet again of the Supreme Court constitutional convention, which he acknowledged for the first time—and I thank him for acknowledging that convention, which is important. It's not a joking matter that when a matter is before the courts, it is advised constitutionally that we, as members, don't intervene in those proceedings. The standing orders speak to it as well.

I would just encourage the members opposite again that we should refrain from engaging in conversation about an issue that is before a court, before a judge. As they teach us in law school, the judge is the trier of fact, the members of the Legislature are not. I will leave the matter to the judge.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Once again, my question is back to the Acting Premier. The government House leader's exact words were "there is a constitutional convention" and "even the Supreme Court has indicated" that "it should not be discussed within Parliament." Yet, the Premier stood in this House and said she didn't expect charges against Pat Sorbara. She answered over 100 questions on the topic. I don't understand why the Premier is now avoiding answering an easy question about testifying in the trial.

Why won't the Premier tell us if she will testify? Why is she hiding behind this convention?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Again, I just want to remind the member opposite—and I think he acknowledged the fact that the Premier has been very transparent in this House. The Premier has now answered over 110 questions from members opposite on this particular issue and she has done so in a manner that is respectful of the independent investigative function that exists in our province and within our constitutional scope of things, and in a way that has been open and clear and transparent and truthful to the people of Ontario as well.

I just ask the member opposite to respect those important conventions that have been cited by the Supreme Court. I refer back to him his own advice that he gave us back in February of this year, that we should not interfere in any ongoing investigation—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

DEFERRED VOTES

GREAT LAKES PROTECTION ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LA PROTECTION DES GRANDS LACS

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 66, An Act to protect and restore the Great Lakes–St. Lawrence River Basin / Projet de loi 66, Loi visant la protection et le rétablissement du bassin des Grands Lacs et du fleuve Saint-Laurent.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1138 to 1143.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On Tuesday, October 6, 2015, Mr. Murray moved third reading of Bill 66. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Gates, Wayne	Moridi, Reza
Anderson, Granville	Gélinas, France	Murray, Glen R.
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gravelle, Michael	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Baker, Yvan	Gretzky, Lisa	Naqvi, Yasir
Balkissoon, Bas	Hatfield, Percy	Natyshak, Taras
Ballard, Chris	Hoggarth, Ann	Oraziotti, David
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Horwath, Andrea	Potts, Arthur
Bradley, James J.	Hoskins, Eric	Qaadi, Shafiq
Chiarelli, Bob	Hunter, Miltzie	Rinaldi, Lou
Colle, Mike	Jaczek, Helena	Sandals, Liz
Crack, Grant	Kiwala, Sophie	Sattler, Peggy
Damerla, Dipika	Kwinter, Monte	Sergio, Mario
Del Duca, Steven	Lalonde, Marie-France	Singh, Jagmeet
Delaney, Bob	Leal, Jeff	Sousa, Charles
Dhillon, Vic	MacCharles, Tracy	Tabuns, Peter
Dickson, Joe	Malhi, Harinder	Takhar, Harinder S.
DiNovo, Cheri	Mangat, Amrit	Taylor, Monique
Dong, Han	Mantha, Michael	Thibeault, Glenn
Fife, Catherine	Martins, Cristina	Vanthof, John
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Mauro, Bill	Vernile, Daiene
Forster, Cindy	McGarry, Kathryn	Wong, Soo
Fraser, John	McMeekin, Ted	Zimmer, David
French, Jennifer K.	Meilleur, Madeleine	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those against, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Pettapiece, Randy
Bailey, Robert	Jones, Sylvia	Scott, Laurie
Barrett, Toby	MacLaren, Jack	Smith, Todd
Clark, Steve	Martow, Gila	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fedeli, Victor	McDonnell, Jim	Walker, Bill
Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia	Yakubski, John
Harris, Michael	Nicholls, Rick	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 68; the nays are 20.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

PROTECTING CONDOMINIUM OWNERS ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LA PROTECTION DES PROPRIÉTAIRES DE CONDOMINIUMS

Deferred vote on the motion that the question now be put on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 106, An Act to amend the Condominium Act, 1998, to enact the Condominium Management Services Act, 2015 and to amend other Acts with respect to condominiums / *Projet de loi 106, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur les condominiums, édictant la Loi de 2015 sur les services de gestion de condominiums et modifiant d'autres lois en ce qui concerne les condominiums.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1147 to 1148.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On September 15, 2015, Mr. Orazietti moved second reading of Bill 106, An Act to amend the Condominium Act, 1998, to enact the Condominium Management Services Act, 2015 and to amend other Acts with respect to condominiums.

Mr. Colle has moved that the question be now put. All those in favour of Mr. Colle's motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Fraser, John	Meilleur, Madeleine
Anderson, Granville	Gravelle, Michael	Moridi, Reza
Baker, Yvan	Hoggarth, Ann	Murray, Glen R.
Balkissoon, Bas	Hoskins, Eric	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Ballard, Chris	Hunter, Mitzie	Naqvi, Yasir
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jaczek, Helena	Orazietti, David
Bradley, James J.	Kiwala, Sophie	Potts, Arthur
Chiarelli, Bob	Kwinter, Monte	Qaadri, Shafiq
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Marie-France	Rinaldi, Lou
Crack, Grant	Leal, Jeff	Sandals, Liz
Damerla, Dipika	MacCharles, Tracy	Sergio, Mario
Del Duca, Steven	Malhi, Harinder	Sousa, Charles
Delaney, Bob	Mangat, Amrit	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dhillon, Vic	Martins, Cristina	Thibeault, Glenn
Dickson, Joe	Mauro, Bill	Vernile, Daiene
Dong, Han	McGarry, Kathryn	Wong, Soo
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McMeekin, Ted	Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time to be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hardeman, Ernie	Pettapiece, Randy
Arnott, Ted	Harris, Michael	Sattler, Peggy
Bailey, Robert	Hatfield, Percy	Scott, Laurie
Barrett, Toby	Horwath, Andrea	Singh, Jagmeet
Clark, Steve	Hudak, Tim	Smith, Todd
DiNovo, Cheri	Jones, Sylvia	Tabuns, Peter
Fedeli, Victor	MacLaren, Jack	Taylor, Monique
Fife, Catherine	Mantha, Michael	Thompson, Lisa M.
Forster, Cindy	Marlow, Gila	Vanthof, John
French, Jennifer K.	McDonnell, Jim	Walker, Bill
Gates, Wayne	Munro, Julia	Yakubuski, John
Gélinas, France	Natyshak, Taras	
Gretzky, Lisa	Nicholls, Rick	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 51; the nays are 37.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Orazietti has moved second reading of Bill 106, An Act to amend the Condominium Act, 1998, to enact the Condominium Management Services Act, 2015 and to amend other Acts with respect to condominiums. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1151 to 1152.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Gravelle, Michael	Murray, Glen R.
Anderson, Granville	Gretzky, Lisa	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hardeman, Ernie	Naqvi, Yasir
Arnott, Ted	Harris, Michael	Natyshak, Taras
Bailey, Robert	Hatfield, Percy	Nicholls, Rick
Baker, Yvan	Hoggarth, Ann	Orazietti, David
Balkissoon, Bas	Horwath, Andrea	Pettapiece, Randy
Ballard, Chris	Hoskins, Eric	Potts, Arthur
Barrett, Toby	Hudak, Tim	Qaadri, Shafiq
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hunter, Mitzie	Rinaldi, Lou
Bradley, James J.	Jaczek, Helena	Sandals, Liz
Chiarelli, Bob	Jones, Sylvia	Sattler, Peggy
Clark, Steve	Kiwala, Sophie	Scott, Laurie
Colle, Mike	Kwinter, Monte	Sergio, Mario
Crack, Grant	Lalonde, Marie-France	Singh, Jagmeet
Damerla, Dipika	Leal, Jeff	Smith, Todd
Del Duca, Steven	MacCharles, Tracy	Sousa, Charles
Delaney, Bob	MacLaren, Jack	Tabuns, Peter
Dhillon, Vic	Malhi, Harinder	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dickson, Joe	Mangat, Amrit	Taylor, Monique
DiNovo, Cheri	Mantha, Michael	Thibeault, Glenn
Dong, Han	Martins, Cristina	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fedeli, Victor	Marlow, Gila	Vanthof, John
Fife, Catherine	Mauro, Bill	Vernile, Daiene
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McDonnell, Jim	Walker, Bill
Forster, Cindy	McGarry, Kathryn	Wong, Soo
Fraser, John	McMeekin, Ted	Yakubuski, John
French, Jennifer K.	Meilleur, Madeleine	Zimmer, David
Gates, Wayne	Moridi, Reza	
Gélinas, France	Munro, Julia	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time to be recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 88; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon. David Orazietti: I refer the bill to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no further deferred votes. This House stands—

Interjection.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm halfway through, so I will acknowledge the member for Beaches—East York on a point of order.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you very much, Speaker, for that indulgence. I want to introduce a good friend of mine, Maria Sarav-Voutsinas, who's in the House. She's mother of page Angelica.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell on a point of order.

Mr. Grant Crack: Just a reminder: room 247-248, Gleggarry–Prescott–Russell day. Mr. Hudak, come on over.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no further deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1156 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Yvan Baker: I'd just like to introduce my staff—my EA, Sinead Anderson, and my LA, Aashish Oberoi—who have been working very hard on my private member's bill. I wanted to welcome them to the House today.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I ask the members here, did you brush your teeth today? Did you take any prescription pills? Are you wearing a rayon shirt or blouse? You may ask, Speaker, what do these have in common? I can tell you that all of those products contain wood pulp.

Does your car have an airbag? If so, the detonator has wood fibre. Was there shredded cheese on your lunch? If so, the cellulose gum that stops it from sticking is wood pulp. Are there paper clips in your desk? Wood fibre stops those from rusting. Did you get flowers in a cellophane wrap or candy in a crinkly package? That's all wood pulp, cellulose from wood chips.

Tomorrow, members at the Standing Committee on Justice Policy will be asked to stand up for the forestry sector and for northern Ontario. There are amendments to Bill 52 to ensure the legislation isn't manipulated to the detriment of the north. The bill is meant to protect the voices of the people who are unable to protect themselves, not the multi-million dollar anti-forestry special-interest groups. I urge the government to support the amendments and stand up for the people of northern Ontario.

COMMUNITY LIVING ELGIN

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'd like to talk about the ongoing concerns about layoff notices at Community Living Elgin in the London area. My colleague the member from Hamilton Mountain has written a letter to the Minister of Community and Social Services about the seriousness of these layoff notices and their impact on our region.

This government has already slashed programming and services for some of our province's most vulnerable people, and non-profits and transfer payment agencies like Community Living are left picking up the slack. To add further injury, they government has not supported

pay equity obligations with funding that allows these organizations to make ends meet.

The government has promised to reduce wait-lists for services like those offered by Community Living Elgin, and yet we are seeing unprecedented workforce cuts and more damage to an already precarious system. This says nothing of the ripple effect of the impact of the resultant job losses.

Southwestern Ontario is suffering from serious unemployment and continues, time and time again, to be the victim of this government's inability to manage the economy. The minister has said that she and her ministry are monitoring the situation at Community Living Elgin extremely closely. We'd be very interested to know what this extremely close monitoring has revealed.

The minister also stated, on September 17 in a response to a question, that the review would take a number of weeks. It has been nearly a month and I would like to know when we can expect to see the results of this review.

BOWMANVILLE APPLEFEST

Mr. Granville Anderson: Another great festival in downtown Bowmanville: Saturday, October 17, is historic downtown Bowmanville's Applefest. This is the 25th year for this incredibly popular event, and if you know Durham, you know the importance of apples to our local agricultural sector and economy.

For the day, four blocks in the downtown of Bowmanville will be closed to vehicular traffic to become an apple-related showcase. My plan is to get there early; there's always a lineup for fresh, hot apple fritters, but it's always worth the wait.

I know how hard our local apple producers have worked to ensure the best crop possible under some tough spring conditions this year.

I also know that historic downtown Bowmanville's BIA puts in a huge effort to ensure events like this go ahead and are a wonderful success. I would like to thank them for all they do in advance of this year's event, which I'm sure, as always, will be fantastic.

If you don't have plans for October 17, I would invite you to join us in Bowmanville. It's well worth the trip. I'll even share some of my fritters with you. Please come and join us on October 17.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mrs. Julia Munro: Today I rise to speak about the province-wide opposition to the Premier's fire sale of Hydro One, and specifically to the overwhelming opposition in my own riding of York–Simcoe.

This summer, the Simcoe county council supported a resolution from the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus, which cautioned that "privatization, partial or whole, of electricity has led to higher rates and less control." In their resolution, they called on the provincial government to both stop the sale of any part of Hydro One and

maintain Hydro One as a wholly public asset for the benefit of all Ontarians, and as well, to respect the autonomy and local decision-making powers of local distribution companies by not forcing these companies into mergers or sales.

They argue that the government has no mandate to sell any part of Hydro One, and I agree. They are worried that Hydro One will no longer be subject to scrutiny by the Auditor General, the Ombudsman or the Integrity Commissioner. Further, they will no longer have to respond to freedom-of-information requests.

Voters know that this government is ignoring their voices on this matter, and are rallying to other levels of government in the hope of being heard.

This resolution must sound familiar to the Premier, as it was sent to her in a letter from the county of Simcoe on August 11. It may also sound familiar to the Minister of Energy and the Minister of Finance.

BEAR CONTROL

Mr. John Vanthof: On Wednesday evening, September 23, Mr. Sam Bryand was doing something we commonly do in northern Ontario. He was out bird hunting—partridge hunting—just outside of Latchford, something a lot of us do. But the hunter became the hunted when a fairly large black bear came out on the trail.

Sam did what we are told to do and tried to stand off the bear, but the bear wasn't in the mood to do what he was supposed to do. So Sam did what I think every person in this House would do. When the bear started coming, Sam ran, and I don't blame Sam a bit. Sam had a .22. He turned and shot the .22 in hopes of scaring the bear. And when Sam reached town, thankfully, the bear wasn't there.

That is not an isolated incident in northern Ontario. People have to deal with bears all the time. Although, according to the minister, we spend more educating people with Bear Wise than any other jurisdiction, no one in the MNR is actually protecting people from nuisance bears. It shouldn't be up to the municipalities. It shouldn't be up to the police, because they're not trained to protect against bears. It's up to the MNR. People shouldn't have to risk their lives doing the things they enjoy in northern Ontario.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Yvan Baker: We have world-class post-secondary institutions in Ontario. The choice a student makes about their program of study and the institution at which they will study is one of the most pivotal and important decisions a person will make in their life. It is one of the largest financial investments we make in our early lives, and the choice of post-secondary study shapes the path we follow in our careers. That is why it is so important that students are able to access the information they need to make an informed decision about their post-secondary studies.

After being elected, I met with student groups, businesses, colleges, universities and others. Some spoke about the struggles of choosing a post-secondary path. It is not an easy decision to make, and many students and their families sometimes struggle to find the information they need to make an informed decision.

Today I'll be introducing a private member's bill that tasks the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario with the creation of an online resource that would help students make more informed decisions as they decide on which university or college to attend and which program of study to pursue. The resource would do this by providing a more comprehensive picture for students about access, student experience and graduate outcomes for each program offered at each of Ontario's post-secondary institutions.

I'd like to thank the Canadian Federation of Students, the College Student Alliance, the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance and the Ontario Graduate Students' Alliance for their advice in the drafting of this bill and their subsequent endorsement.

This bill would, if passed, help students and families make more informed decisions, leading to more satisfied students and stronger outcomes. I humbly request my fellow members here in the Legislature for their support as it works its way through the House.

1510

CARP FARMERS' MARKET

Mr. Jack MacLaren: This year is the 25th anniversary of the Carp Farmers' Market. The Carp Farmers' Market was founded in 1990 by Hildegard Anderson. She was a farm girl from Saskatchewan who had a vision of a producer-based farmers' market in the village of Carp. She found a location, she found the people, she established a board of directors, she found vendors, and the Carp Farmers' Market began.

The main guiding principle that she insisted on was that all the vendors be producers of what they sold; in other words, a producer-based farmers market. That principle has been the guiding light and strength of the market to this day. The Carp Farmers' Market has flourished and today is the most successful producer-based farmers' market in Ontario.

Delicious foods and wonderful handmade products are available in Carp every Saturday. The number of vendors and customers continues to grow each year.

The Carp Farmers' Market celebrated their 25th anniversary on July 4 of this year. Hildegard Anderson died in a car crash in 1993, but her legacy lives on. She would be proud of the Carp Farmer's Market if she were here with us today.

COMMUNITY POLICING

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: On September 16, I had the opportunity to attend the Community Policing Dinner hosted by the Mississauga Chinese Business Association

in the great riding of Mississauga–Brampton South. The association advocates for community development through private business and support for local partners, such as Peel Regional Police.

At the dinner, the association paid tribute to the local police officer whose career best represents the qualities of community policing. This year, Constable Tom McKay, with Peel Regional Police, was chosen to receive their prestigious award for his community engagement and years of work in crime prevention. Constable McKay has an impressive resumé as a 30-year veteran of Peel Regional Police, an author, lecturer and leader in the field of crime prevention.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Constable McKay for his commitment and also the Mississauga Chinese Business Association for building a safer, more dynamic and vibrant community.

THREADS OF LIFE

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Imagine this: You're rushing around in the morning. You shout goodbye as your husband, son or daughter heads out the door to work. Sounds pretty normal. However, that loved one never makes it home or has a horrible accident that changes everyone's life forever. Although workplace deaths and accidents have been reduced considerably, one death is still too many.

Over the weekend, I had the honour of speaking at the Threads of Life event on behalf of the Minister of Labour. Threads of Life helps families of workplace tragedies along their journey of healing by providing unique family support programs and services.

Threads of Life is supported by a network of volunteers from across Canada who have been personally impacted by workplace tragedy. They assist families by providing a family support program which offers one-on-one peer support to family members and friends who have suffered from a tragedy such as this. They are matched with a volunteer family guide. They also have regional family forums and bring families together in a community of support to benefit from coping skills, active listening and healing.

Speaker, I want to commend Threads of Life for the amazing work they do for families impacted by these terrible workplace tragedies.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bills without amendment:

Bill Pr24, An Act to revive The Gage Research Institute.

Bill Pr25, An Act to revive Zara H.S.L.C.C Inc.

Bill Pr28, An Act to revive Bayview Farms and Enterprises Limited.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

Report adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PATHWAYS TO POST-SECONDARY EXCELLENCE ACT (POST-SECONDARY EDUCATIONAL REPORT), 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LES VOIES DE L'EXCELLENCE AU NIVEAU POSTSECONDAIRE (RAPPORT SUR L'ENSEIGNEMENT POSTSECONDAIRE)

Mr. Baker moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 127, An Act to amend the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario Act, 2005 to require the Council to collect and publish information in respect of certain educational institutions / Projet de loi 127, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2005 sur le Conseil ontarien de la qualité de l'enseignement supérieur pour exiger que le Conseil recueille et publie des renseignements concernant certains établissements d'enseignement.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Yvan Baker: This bill would create an online resource that expands on information available about post-secondary education by providing a more comprehensive picture about access, student experience and graduate outcomes at the program level. Using an online tool, students and families will find it easier to make informed choices about post-secondary education options.

BUSINESS CORPORATIONS AMENDMENT ACT (MEETINGS OF SHAREHOLDERS AND EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION), 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES SOCIÉTÉS PAR ACTIONS (ASSEMBLÉES DES ACTIONNAIRES ET RÉTRIBUTION DES MEMBRES DE LA DIRECTION)

Mr. Takhar moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 128, An Act to amend the Business Corporations Act with respect to meetings of shareholders and the adoption of an executive compensation policy / *Projet de loi 128, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les sociétés par actions en ce qui concerne les assemblées des actionnaires et l'adoption d'une politique relative à la rétribution des membres de la direction.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Harinder S. Takhar: Mr. Speaker, this bill makes various amendments to the Business Corporations Act with respect to meetings of shareholders and the election of directors. Shareholders are given the ability to choose the chair of every meeting of shareholders. In addition, directors can only be elected with a plurality of votes, despite anything in the articles or bylaws of the corporation.

MOTIONS

ESTIMATES

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice with respect to the Standing Committee on Estimates.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The House leader is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 60 and the order of the House dated September 14, 2015, the Standing Committee on Estimates shall consider the 2015-16 estimates of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care before the 2015-16 estimates of the Ministry of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure and the Ministry of Research and Innovation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader moves that, notwithstanding standing order 60 and the order of the House—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? Dispense.

Agreed? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

1520

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot item 74 and 77 be waived.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

NATIONAL PEACE OFFICERS' MEMORIAL RUN

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Mr. Speaker, before I present my statement, I was hoping I can get unanimous consent from the members so that I can wear my Run to Remember T-shirt that I'll be speaking about.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Did you wash it?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I did.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There's two that I'll let slide for sure because they were good.

The government House leader seeks unanimous consent to wear the T-shirt that he ran all that time in. Do we agree? Agreed.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you, Speaker. I can assure the members that this T-shirt has been washed a couple of times since I wore it for three days.

Speaker, it's my honour to speak in recognition of the National Peace Officers' Memorial Run, which took place from September 24 to September 26. Each year for the past 11 years, runners have set off from the police memorial at Queen's Park to embark on the 460-kilometre, three-day relay run to Parliament Hill in Ottawa.

This relay run was created to raise awareness of the annual Canadian Police and Peace Officers' Memorial Service in honour of fallen peace officers, held in Ottawa on the last Sunday of September. The run also helps raise funds to help support surviving spouses and children of those fallen officers.

I was proud to join our Premier, the leaders of the opposition, Canadian icon Don Cherry and almost 300 runners to help kick off this year's run. Runners included representatives of police services from across Ontario; members of the Canadian Military Police; the Ontario Provincial Police; the RCMP; the Canadian Border Services Agency; Ontario correctional services; and Survivors of Law Enforcement, also known as SOLE, who are the spouses and loved ones of fallen officers. SOLE was an inspiration to the runners throughout the run, and their spirit and strength helped make every mile seem shorter.

I was honoured to run alongside almost 300 runners, Ontario's finest police and peace officers. I was part of an 11-member Ottawa police team. I would like to thank them for their participation, their camaraderie and for welcoming me within their ranks over the three days. It was truly an honour to run with them.

I want to give a special thanks to the members of the Ottawa police team: Acting Staff Sergeant Alison Cookson, Constable Cindy Cybulski, Clint Eastop, Constable Danielle Gammon, Constable Lisa Grison, Constable Lisa King, Constable Peter Koch, Constable Amanda Larche, Sergeant Debbie Palmer, Constable Cathy Wood and Renee Viel.

I also want to acknowledge the team members from Ontario correctional services for participating in the run. I want to thank Paul Chmurnyński, Scott Willey, Dana Falconi, Derek Huisman, Stephen Laidlaw, Joe D'Andrea, Tijana Lakovic, Aleasha Shorts, Carol Povse, Raj Toor, Kimberley Ridgers, Scott Jones, Larry Shorts, Andrew Boden, Derek Morgan, Martin O'Grady, Zdenka Mijatovic, Suzanne Gadoury, Matthew Berti, Rose Beauchamp, Sherry Loisselle, Lisa O'Brien, Jesse Barrette, Kellie Walker and Kristy Baynton. Not to mention, Speaker, huge gratitude to the 25 OPP officers from detachments across the province, along with uniformed and civilian members of police services from all corners of Ontario.

Speaker, this run was started in 2005 by a Peel Regional Police running team called the Pacers. Twenty-four runners took part in the inaugural run. This run reminds us of the important job that police, correctional services personnel, and all peace officers do every day to help keep our communities safe. It acknowledges the sacrifices they make on our behalf. It is our assurance to their surviving family members, their former colleagues and to all peace officers that we will never forget their service as they undertake this dangerous yet noble task.

The run has generated more than \$215,000 in contributions to the Ontario and Canadian police memorials to date.

Over the course of the run, I was honoured to have the opportunity to speak at the Chris Garrett Park in Cobourg, where a memorial pays tribute to one of Cobourg's finest, killed in the line of duty. We also had the opportunity to stop in Brockville to pay respect to RCMP Constable Douglas Scott, whose funeral I attended in late 2007. It was a great pleasure also to see the member from Leeds–Grenville, and the former member from Leeds–Grenville, now Senator Runciman, also attend the ceremony.

The run took us across some of the most beautiful and picturesque vistas in Ontario and, indeed, anywhere in Canada. Imagine leaving Brockville early in the morning, running along the St. Lawrence River. As we get close to the nine-kilometre mark, the only thing you hear, besides the footsteps of runners running along the road, is a bagpipe in the distance—yes, Speaker, a bagpipe in the distance early in the morning as you're running. As you get close to the nine-kilometre mark, you see Mr. Stewart Nimmo who, year after year, has been playing the bagpipes to welcome the runners and pay homage to those who are fallen. A big gratitude to Mr. Nimmo for participating in the run in a very special way every year.

Hundreds of Ontarians come to wish us well along the route and to show their shared commitment to honour the

memory of our fallen peace officers. A special thanks to many of the ministry's staff and their friends who joined the runners for part of the route to show their support.

None of this would be possible without the hard work and dedication of the organizers. From Peel Regional Police comes the core organizing team made up of Staff Superintendent Randy Patrick, who is the founder of the run and chair of the committee; Inspector Brian Smithson; Inspector Magdi Younan; Sergeant Matt Small; and detective Rob Hackenbrook. All these individuals are instrumental, not only in organizing the run but throughout the run, in making sure that everything runs smoothly and we pay due respect to our fallen police and peace officers.

In addition, teams of organizers in Toronto and Ottawa worked on the logistics of the kickoff and closing ceremonies. In Toronto, a special thanks to Detective Jon Ling and Sergeant Darren Laing. In Ottawa, huge gratitude to Staff Sergeant Gina Rosa and Acting Staff Sergeant Alison Cookson.

I also want to salute Erin Ochakovsky, the president of Survivors of Law Enforcement, also known as SOLE, herself the widow of a fallen police officer, and all the members of the organization of SOLE, including all the surviving family members of fallen police officers, for their tireless efforts in keeping alive the memory of the fallen. They were truly an inspiration throughout the Run to Remember.

I wish to express my sincere thanks to all those police and peace officers from Ontario who participated in the Canadian Police and Peace Officers' Memorial Service also that Sunday.

I got the opportunity to run 89 kilometres over the three days, and I must say that every step I took was worth it. It was a reminder of the risks our police officers and peace officers take to keep us safe, and we will forever honour the memory of our fallen peace officers.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Thank you for the opportunity to rise in recognition of the National Peace Officers' Memorial Run, the Run to Remember. If I could acknowledge the great work that the member for Ottawa Centre did in participating in the run, side by side with the police officers. Congratulations for that effort.

It was an honour to be there for the opening ceremonies, to address the runners, the police officers and all the supporters for this 11th annual three-day run. I have had the chance to address this venue before, when I was in the federal House, on behalf of the federal government, and participated in the run myself in past years.

1530

I wanted to recognize the incredible work, as the member for Ottawa Centre did, of Randy Patrick, who is the founder and the driving force behind this incredible success over the last 11 years. Randy is a Peel Regional Police staff superintendent and has certainly made this his passion. The memorial run is a wonderful way to raise awareness and focus attention on the annual police

and peace officers' memorial service. It serves the community extremely well to recognize these fallen heroes.

In 1998, a federal proclamation declared that the last Sunday in September each year be Police and Peace Officers' National Memorial Day, and holding this run preceding that observance has only built more recognition for this important date. I applaud all the participants who have participated in all the legs of the run.

I'd also like to take a moment to acknowledge some of the fallen heroes who I had the opportunity to encounter during my service in Simcoe county. I'd like to acknowledge our fallen heroes 41-year-old South Simcoe Police Constable Alan Kuzmich; 43-year-old father of three Detective Constable Rob Plunkett from Midhurst; and Peel Regional Police Constable James Ochakovsky, 36, who lived in Barrie. His wife, Erin, as the member for Ottawa Centre mentioned, has made it a personal mission to continue to support the families of these fallen heroes.

I was very proud to run last year with Gloria Kovach. Gloria was a long-time city councillor in Guelph and lost her own daughter. I've certainly heard from Gloria about the incredible sacrifice and the never-ending impact that this tragedy has on the family, the community and the neighbourhood.

I want to especially recognize the fact that over \$215,000 has been raised over 11 years for the National Peace Officers' Memorial Run.

The reason I wanted to speak to this item myself today is because, as you know, on my first day in this Legislature as the new MPP for Simcoe North, I mentioned that we need to do more to honour our fallen heroes. It's one thing to have this run, but I think we can do more as parliamentarians from every side in recognizing these fallen heroes. With the Canadian Forces, we have compensation for the families, a small benefit to help them after this tragedy. I think it's only appropriate that we do that in Canada. I said on my first day in the Legislature as the MPP for Simcoe North, and I repeat it today, that I think it's entirely appropriate for us to have an Ontario heroes' fund to recognize these fallen heroes.

Today, I want to say that the run is wonderful and an important recognition, a deserved recognition. I would hope we can all work together to move the yardstick forward and actually have something similar to what the Canadian Forces have. And I wanted to say, on behalf of the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus: Let us never forget our fallen heroes and the incredible and immeasurable sacrifice they have made for our safety and for our security in our communities.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: It is my honour to stand in this Legislature and make comments as the NDP critic for community safety and correctional services. I appreciate having the opportunity to respond to the minister's statement and speak on the topic of the National Peace Officers' Memorial Run to Remember.

The annual Run to Remember, as we've heard, is to raise awareness and focus attention on the police and peace officers' memorial service held every year on the last Sunday of September. Many are unable to attend the

memorial service in Ottawa, and the run gives peace officers and citizens along the route the chance to participate and reflect on the sacrifices of the officers whose names are etched on the memorial wall in Ottawa. It is a chance for those who run to think about the families and communities of those lost in the line of duty.

The first unified police and peace officers' memorial was held in Ottawa on Sunday September 29, 1996. Now, every year on the last Sunday in September, a memorial service is held on Parliament Hill honouring both fallen peace and police officers.

The Run to Remember started in 2005 and has grown ever since. The run starts at the Ontario Police Memorial in Toronto and ends at the national monument in Ottawa. The core group of runners who participate in the full three-day relay—including some people in this room—has grown to over 250 and includes supporters and surviving families of fallen officers. Many others join the run for part of the journey, sharing in the journey of remembrance.

This is engraved on one of the three stones at the memorial in Ottawa: "The Canadian Police and Peace Officers' memorial honour roll pays tribute to the sacrifice of these brave men and women killed in the performance of their duties."

We have a police monument in Ontario. We don't have a monument, however, to our fallen correctional officers or peace officers. It was my privilege to speak at our corrections memorial service last fall, but we are missing a place, a monument, a permanent tribute to those who have given the ultimate sacrifice: those killed in the performance of their duties. I know the government recognizes this and I hope that they will help to speed the bureaucratic process along.

We must recognize and remember those who have been killed in the line of duty, but we have to start talking about those who are no longer able to perform their duties but are still with us. We have to recognize the very real sacrifice being made every day by officers when it comes to their own mental health and wellness. We have officers damaged, struggling and tormented by the trauma and threat faced in their work environments. We have peace and police officers, first responders, constant responders—those who answer the call—who can be forever changed, and some forever damaged, during the performance of their duties. We must recognize their sacrifice and honour it with a strategy to help them through. We in this Legislature must acknowledge that post-traumatic stress disorder is a devastating reality for many and must be supported and treated.

We have passed Bill 2 through second reading, and now it is stuck in the government channels. My colleague from Parkdale-High Park has started this conversation, but what say you, government? Will we commit to our first responders, our police officers, peace officers, correctional officers, firefighters, paramedics, 911 operators, Ministry of Labour investigators and more? So many more need to be part of the conversation and final strategy and solution. Will we put our money where our

mouth is and take action? People who keep us safe are struggling, suffering and dying by suicide. Will we remember them? Will we defend the health and well-being of those who keep us safe and secure, and pledge to support them now with preventative and appropriate services and support?

We know PTSD is real, but so is the struggle leading to that diagnosis. We must commit to supporting our officers, our friends, neighbours and family members so that they can continue to perform their duties and keep us safe and secure.

As it is engraved on one of the stones of the memorial, "They are our heroes. We shall not forget them." Speaker, we shall never forget them but that isn't enough. We must protect and support them so that they can healthily protect and support us.

PETITIONS

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Norm Miller: I have 1,593 signatures from the Bracebridge area with regard to health care in Muskoka. It reads:

"In Support of a Full Range of Core Hospital Services at Both the South Muskoka Memorial Hospital in Bracebridge and the Huntsville District Memorial Hospital.

"Whereas the provision of a full range of core hospital services, including acute care in-patient, emergency, diagnostic and surgical services, at both the South Muskoka Memorial Hospital in Bracebridge and the Huntsville District Memorial Hospital by Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare (MAHC) is vital for all of the communities in the Muskoka region; and

"Whereas the continued delivery of those core hospital services at both the South Muskoka Memorial Hospital in Bracebridge and the Huntsville District Memorial Hospital is crucial to the long-term sustainability and economic vitality of the two communities and the entire Muskoka region; and

"Whereas the residents of Bracebridge, Huntsville and the other communities in Muskoka have strongly supported multi-site delivery of a full range of core hospital services, including acute care in-patient, emergency, diagnostic and surgical services, at both the South Muskoka Memorial Hospital in Bracebridge and the Huntsville District Memorial Hospital; and

"Whereas, contrary to the wishes of the people of Muskoka, the board of directors of Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare has approved the 'one-hospital model' as the preferred model for hospital service delivery in the future;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) That the province of Ontario ensure that a full range of core hospital services, including acute care in-patient, emergency, diagnostic and surgical services, are

maintained on a multi-site basis at both the South Muskoka Memorial Hospital in Bracebridge and the Huntsville District Memorial Hospital;

"(2) That the province of Ontario ensure that the changes to Ontario's health care delivery system currently being implemented do not negatively impact access to services and the quality of care in Bracebridge, Huntsville and the entire Muskoka region;

"(3) That the province of Ontario ensure that the changes to Ontario's health care delivery system currently being implemented recognize the unique and important role that smaller hospitals, such as the South Muskoka Memorial Hospital and the Huntsville District Memorial Hospital, have in promoting economic development and creating sustainable communities in Ontario."

I support this and will give it to Krishaj.

1540

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Privatizing Hydro One: Another Wrong Choice.

"Whereas once you privatize hydro, there's no return; and

"We'll lose billions in reliable annual revenues for schools and hospitals; and

"We'll lose our biggest economic asset and control over our energy future; and

"We'll pay higher and higher hydro bills just like what's happened elsewhere;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To stop the sale of Hydro One and make sure Ontario families benefit from owning Hydro One now and for generations to come."

I sign this petition and give it to page Kelly to deliver.

LUNG HEALTH

Mr. Arthur Potts: I have a petition also to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children. Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

"In the Ontario Lung Association report *Your Lungs, Your Life*, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To allow for deputations on MPP Kathryn McGarry's private member's bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014,

which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario Lung Health Action Plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

“Once debated at committee, to expedite Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, through the committee stage and back to the Legislature for third and final reading; and to immediately call for a vote on Bill 41 and to seek royal assent immediately upon its passage.”

I agree with this petition.

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure today to rise and present over 7,000 signatures from the local community of Plympton-Wyoming in regard to the fire department there.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there is a lack of evidence to support the charge of careless driving against Neil Bain, volunteer firefighter for the town of Plympton-Wyoming, after the fire truck he was driving while responding to an accident in whiteout conditions was part of a multi-vehicle accident on Highway 402, March 25, 2014;

“Whereas Bain was the only person charged in the accident involving 15 vehicles including transports;

“Whereas volunteer firefighters will be hesitant to volunteer if they fear repercussions that could affect their personal insurance and/or employment;

“Whereas the Wyoming volunteer fire department and other fire departments that respond to the 402 Highway and other 400-series highway events in the province of Ontario may opt to decline services to said routes leaving travellers unprotected;

“We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand that the crown attorney immediately withdraw all charges made against Neil Bain, volunteer firefighter for the town of Plympton-Wyoming.”

I agree with this petition and affix my signature to it.

DENTAL CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that was brought to me by Michelle Ellery from Hanmer in my riding. It reads as follows:

“Whereas thousands of Ontarians live with pain and infection because they cannot afford dental care;

“Whereas the promised \$45-million dental fund under the Poverty Reduction Strategy excluded impoverished adults;

“Whereas the program was designed with rigid criteria so that most of the people in need do not qualify; and

“Whereas desperately needed dental care money went unspent and was diverted to other areas even though people are still suffering without access to dental care;”

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To do all in its power to stop the dental fund from being diverted to support other programs; and

“To fully utilize the commissioned funding to provide dental care to those in need.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Eastyn to bring it to the Clerk.

SOINS PALLIATIFS

M. Victor Fedeli: « À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Nous, les soussignés, pétitionnons l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario comme suit :

« Nous, les soussignés, appuyons le conseil d'administration de la Maison Sérénité du Nipissing dans sa mission de construire une maison de soins palliatifs autonome, un foyer où les mourants de tous les âges, cultures et langues seront traités avec compassion et dignité, un autre chez-soi qui donnera confort et paix dans un milieu serein plutôt que dans un milieu bruyant d'un hôpital de soins aigus.

« Nous reconnaissons le besoin urgent d'une maison de soins palliatifs pour desservir les patients en phase terminale de la région de Nipissing et Parry Sound Est. »

J'y signe mon nom et je donne cette pétition à la page législative Kelly.

TENANT PROTECTION

Ms. Catherine Fife: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas escalating rental costs are making Ontario less affordable and exposing many tenants to further financial insecurity;

“Whereas tenants living in residential apartments and condominiums built after 1991 are not protected within the Residential Tenancies Act by rent control guidelines, nor are they protected from other arbitrary changes to their rent which currently cannot be appealed to the Landlord and Tenant Board;

“Whereas this has created an unfair, two-tier system of tenant protection in Ontario where some tenants have no protection from large and arbitrary increases;

“Whereas fixing these simple exemption loopholes will help protect tenants and help make housing more affordable for thousands of Ontarians;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the province of Ontario acts to protect all tenants in Ontario and immediately move to ensure that all Ontario tenants living in buildings, mobile home parks and land-lease communities are covered by the rent guidelines in the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006.”

It's my pleasure to share this petition with the assembly. I affix my signature and give it to page Calvin.

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

Mr. Arthur Potts: I'm hoping to get more applause from the members of the third party on this one as well.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas some establishments have instituted unfair tipping practices in which a portion of tips and gratuities are being deducted and kept by owners;

"Whereas employees in establishments where tipping is a standard practice, such as restaurants, bars and hair salons, supplement their income with tips and gratuities and depend on those to maintain an adequate standard of living;

"Whereas customers expect that when they leave a tip or gratuity that the benefit will be going to the employees who directly contributed to their positive experience;

"Whereas most establishments do respect their employees and do not collect their tips and gratuities unfairly and thus are left at a disadvantage compared to those owners who use tips and gratuities to pad their margins;

"Whereas other jurisdictions in North America such as Quebec, New Brunswick and New York City have passed legislation to protect employees' tips;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario support Bill 12, the Protecting Employees' Tips Act, 2014, and help shield Ontario employees and businesses from operators with improper tipping practices while protecting accepted and standard practices such as tip pooling among employees."

I absolutely agree with this petition and leave it with Jacob.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Victor Fedeli: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Auditor General of Ontario defines the global adjustment charge on hydro bills as 'an extra payment covered by ratepayers over and above the actual market price of electricity'; and

"Whereas wind power is simply unreliable, blows mostly at night when we don't need power, creating a surplus Ontario then has to get rid of by paying Quebec and the United States to take it, and the total cost of producing the exported power was about \$2.6 billion more than the revenue Ontario received from exporting that power between 2006 and 2013; and

"Whereas the Auditor General says the global adjustment has risen from \$700 million prior to the Green Energy Act to \$7.7 billion by 2013, and over the past decade, the cumulated amount is about \$50 billion; and

"Whereas Ontario now has the highest industrial rates in North America, and residential hydro bills are forecast to increase 42% by 2018 after peak hydro rates have already more than tripled since 2003; and

"Whereas local First Nations, property owners and aviation and aerospace industry stakeholders have voiced concerns about wind farm installations proposed by Innergex ... in the riding of Nipissing;

"We, the undersigned, do hereby petition the government of Ontario to reverse course on these proposed wind projects and the government's expensive energy policy by cancelling feed-in-tariff (FIT) subsidies, implementing an immediate moratorium on wind power development, and giving municipalities veto authority over wind projects in their communities."

I agree with this, sign my name and give it to page Duha.

1550

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Wayne Gates: "Privatizing Hydro One: Another wrong choice.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas once you privatize hydro, there's no return; and

"We'll lose billions in reliable annual revenues for schools and hospitals; and

"We'll lose our biggest economic asset and control over our energy future; and

"We'll pay higher and higher hydro bills just like what's happened elsewhere;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To stop the sale of Hydro One and make sure Ontario families benefit from owning Hydro One now and for generations to come."

I agree with this petition. I'll sign my name and give it to Sydney.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Arthur Potts: I guess I'm looking for a three-peat here.

"Petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

"Fluoridate All Ontario Drinking Water.

"Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

"Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay...; and

"Whereas dental decay is the second-most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

"Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentrations; and

"Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable

to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the ministries of the government of Ontario adopt the number one recommendation made by the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health in a 2012 report on oral health in Ontario, and amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario.”

It’s a great idea. I’ll leave it with our page Alexander and sign my name.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

POLICE RECORD CHECKS REFORM ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LA RÉFORME DES VÉRIFICATIONS DE DOSSIERS DE POLICE

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 1, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 113, An Act respecting police record checks /
Projet de loi 113, Loi concernant les vérifications de
dossiers de police.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The last time we finished—it’s now the government’s turn.

Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I’m very happy to have the opportunity this afternoon to speak on Bill 113. I will be sharing my time with my colleagues on this side: the Minister of Community and Social Services, the member from Etobicoke Centre and the member from Scarborough Southwest.

I’ve had the chance, over the last few days, at various times, while being here in the chamber to hear some of the other debate that has taken place with respect to Bill 113. Obviously, as was mentioned, it’s at second reading.

This is one of those bills that I find—in listening to the debate in this House, it is, in many respects, encouraging. Of course, from time to time in this place there can be a bit of a partisan cut and thrust, which is perfectly appropriate. Some would argue that I have occasionally practised that myself, but on this particular legislation, I’ve been impressed so far that the level of discourse and debate has actually been quite sincere and quite genuine, which is heartening to see, of course.

I want to begin with my time to congratulate the minister who has brought this forward, someone who has spoken on our side of this House in the past, and certainly amongst all stakeholders, very passionately about the importance of making sure that we do proceed with legislation in this regard that strikes the right balance, and make sure that we get it right.

I believe this has probably been referenced at various times in debate, and I’m sure it will be again, but I had the opportunity to read over a joint statement that was produced by the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, the John Howard Society of Ontario, the Ontario Non-profit Network and the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police—the comment or the statement that they made with respect to this legislation around police record checks: “Good news for Ontario workers, volunteers, students, non-profits and businesses that will now see more consistent information released in police record checks.”

I think that actually goes right to the heart of the importance of this legislation; in fact, in particular, the word “consistent” that is in that quote from those four organizations that I think would have universal respect amongst all members of this Legislature. When you take into account what Bill 113 will be doing, it is that word “consistent” that I think is the most appropriate way to describe the outcome that will be achieved with this legislation.

Of course, we are very proud as a government to have tabled Bill 113 last spring. If passed, this legislation would develop the province’s first-ever clear, consistent and comprehensive framework for how police record checks are conducted here in the province of Ontario. It builds on a number of guidelines that have been developed by law enforcement, policing, civil liberties’ organizations, mental health, community safety, non-profit and business partners. Again, I think that goes right to the heart of why this is important legislation and also will be effective legislation, because the consultation has been comprehensive, because it’s taken into account that there are a number of important stakeholders and partners that have very strong feelings about making sure that we as a government and that we as a Legislature get something that’s so important to people right—and that’s why the consultation has been comprehensive.

It’s also important to note that this kind of approach is already being followed by approximately 70% of the police forces across the province of Ontario. This bill, if passed, will ensure a consistent approach across the province, from the Ontario Provincial Police right down to the smallest police force. Again, this is one of those bills that will give us, if passed, the opportunity to apply that consistent standard across the entire province of Ontario. Most importantly, from the perspective of the people that I represent, it is legislation that will ensure that we get the balance right, so that we produce that consistency that is so important to the people we represent, but we also get the balance right with respect to public safety and the respecting of privacy.

When I think of the people that I represent in Vaughan, and I’m sure that this will be the case for the other three speakers on our side of the House that are to follow—in fact, I know the Minister of Community and Social Services, given that she represents the neighbouring riding to mine in Vaughan, will feel just as passionately about making sure that we strike that right

balance. I look forward to hearing her remarks following mine.

I can say, again, with respect to the minister who has brought forward this bill and the ministry and the hard work that they have done and the consultation that they have done, I'm very, very happy to support Bill 113. I look forward to it continuing through debate at second reading, getting to committee, seeing the work that will come from the committee process itself and having it back here for third reading.

I am very happy to have had the chance this afternoon to speak strongly in support of Bill 113.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I'm certainly delighted to join in the second reading debate, following my colleague the Minister of Transportation, on Bill 113. As he mentioned, of course, what we have done here is strike an excellent balance between human rights, privacy and public safety.

I was very much struck by what Ruth Goba, the Interim Chief Commissioner of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, had to say on the subject of Bill 113: "We are delighted that the proposed legislation will address so many of our concerns. The" OHRC "has long advocated for a record check system that respects human rights, privacy and public safety. We are glad that individuals will be able to see their records and ask for reconsideration—two very important steps forward."

What does this legislation propose to do? I think it's very important—my colleague made the comment regarding consistency. What we're doing here is standardizing three types of police record checks to be offered in Ontario so that there is going to be clear direction on the types of information that must be released or withheld for each type of police record check. There will be direction that an individual can only consent to the release of his or her record checks results to a third party after he or she has reviewed the results. There will also be standards set to ensure that the individual can request reconsideration of the release of certain records. There will be a provision that, five years after passage, the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services will review the legislation and evaluate its implementation—some very strong measures, obviously, in this particular bill.

1600

What are the three levels of record check?

The least intrusive level of record check would disclose basic criminal records, which include criminal convictions.

The next level of check would include the same records, plus certain additional judicial findings such as discharges and judicial orders, as well as outstanding matters such as pending charges and warrants.

The most intrusive level of check—this is where public safety is so important—would be limited to employment and volunteer positions of trust or authority over vulnerable persons; we're talking about children, seniors and those with developmental disabilities. In this type of record check, there would be some additional

records included, but these are some that I think are essential in terms of public safety:

—There would be the release of cases of not criminally responsible by reason of mental disorder. This isn't just incidents involving a mental health contact; this is where someone has been found not criminally responsible by reason of a mental disorder.

—There would also be records such as suspended records of sexually based offences, formerly called pardons.

—Only in exceptional circumstances, when they show a pattern of issues with vulnerable people, would certain additional non-conviction records be included.

At all times, there will be the decision that certain types of records could not be disclosed. This will apply across the province; all police services will abide by these. The types of records that will not be disclosed are things like diversions, convictions under provincial statutes, Ministry of Transportation information, Family Court restraining orders, local police contact information: as I said before, mental health contact, references to contagious diseases—that sounds quite archaic. These things will not be included.

I think it's especially important, for those who simply suffer from an illness related to mental health, that we have ensured that this type of information is irrelevant in the types of reasons why people will require record checks. It is something that I know a great deal of consultation has occurred on with individuals involved with the mental health community, stakeholders and so on.

This is an excellent step forward. As my colleague has said, I think we have heard that there is wide support for this legislation, and I urge all members of the House to support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Etobicoke Centre.

Mr. Yvan Baker: It's an honour to join this debate. Like the Minister of Transportation alluded, I think this is a debate that has been relatively substantive. One of the things I think, when I think about this bill, is the fundamental rights we are trying to defend. Let me share with you what I mean by that.

When I think about our role here, one of the components of our role as members, as MPPs, as representatives, is to defend the fundamental human rights of Canadians. There are several, what I would consider, fundamental human rights that this bill seeks to defend, which are the right to privacy and the presumption of innocence, but also public safety. I think this bill strikes an effective and pragmatic balance.

What does the bill do?

If the bill were passed, this legislation would develop the first-ever clear, consistent and comprehensive framework for how record checks are conducted in our province. It builds on the LEARN Guideline that was developed by policing, civil liberties, mental health, community safety, non-profit and business partners. It's always great to see a piece of legislation put forward that has been put together where a range of stakeholders have

weighed in and where we have taken that thinking and brought it to bear in a piece of legislation. So it's an excellent collaboration.

This has already been followed by approximately 70% of the police forces across the province. One of the factors we have to consider here is that this is about ensuring consistency in terms of how we administer and how we defend those fundamental rights across our province. This will touch everyone, from the OPP to the smallest police force.

Like I said, I think it draws a balance between public safety, but also respecting privacy. There are people who have unfortunately faced unnecessary barriers due to inappropriate non-conviction and non-criminal information such as mental health records—the minister referred to that just a few moments ago—that were disclosed during routine police record checks. There are people who have had their schooling and their careers placed in jeopardy because of this. Literally about a half an hour ago, maybe an hour ago, I introduced a private member's bill that I think will help young people in selecting a post-secondary path and help students to select the post-secondary path that will help further their objectives and their goals. Here we have a situation where there are people who have had their careers and their goals subverted and potentially damaged because information was released that shouldn't have been released, and it influenced a decision that did harm to that individual. This bill seeks to address that. Like I said, people have lost out on employment. They've lost out on career opportunities unnecessarily. We need to limit those cases where that is unnecessary and where that shouldn't have happened.

This legislation would help to remove those unnecessary barriers and therefore increase employment, volunteer and educational opportunities for a lot of people. How it works is that it prohibits the release of non-criminal information such as mental health records, and strictly limits the release of non-conviction records. When we think about the presumption of innocence, when we think about privacy, what this bill is doing is ensuring that non-conviction records—situations where there are records pertaining to somebody who has not been convicted of a crime—not get misused, not used to harm a person. It's important that we respect that presumption of innocence that each of us enjoys and should enjoy. We should enjoy it not only in theory but in practice, and that's what this bill is trying to ensure that we implement.

The bill is also establishing a specific test to ensure that all necessary information is provided in vulnerable sector checks so that those who need it most, those like our children and seniors, continue to be protected. Earlier, I was referring to the fact that this bill draws a pragmatic balance. One of the things that we do need to do is make sure that those who are working with our children, with our seniors, with those who are vulnerable in our population—that the appropriate level of scrutiny is applied to their hiring and their engagement with

children and seniors, because we need to make sure that those vulnerable populations and others are protected. What this ensures is that information can still be accessed where needed in those specific instances.

The bill ensures that individuals will have a chance to review their non-conviction records and seek a reconsideration of the information contained in their check. I think it's a really important thing to consider. If there's information out there pertaining to an individual, and that information could be harmful, but also could be inaccurate or could be misrepresentative, the individuals to whom it pertains will have an opportunity to review their non-conviction records and seek reconsideration of the information. Obviously, that has to be based on merit, and there's a process for that. That's an important thing, to ensure that, again, people's presumption of innocence is protected, that their privacy is protected, and that future opportunities are not unduly limited as a result. These changes in the bill will make Ontario a leader in Canada, with a clear, consistent and comprehensive framework to remove the unnecessary barriers to success for individuals while making sure that our communities are safe.

What I wanted to do for those of my constituents who are watching and who may not be familiar with record checks and what I'm referring to—a record check is a search of police-held records related to an individual. Currently, these records could include things like criminal convictions, judicial orders, charges, acquittals, and apprehensions under the Mental Health Act. Most often a record check is requested by an individual who is seeking employment or to volunteer with an organization. The organization is the one who actually requests the check. Record checks can also be used, among other things, as part of a screening process in education, to approve rental housing, to obtain insurance, or to adopt or gain custody of a child.

1610

As I mentioned earlier, there are obviously instances where people are going to be dealing with vulnerable populations and additional information and scrutiny are appropriate, but in many cases that additional level of scrutiny is not required and unduly can limit someone's opportunities in life. It's important to make sure that we find that pragmatic balance, and I think this bill certainly attempts to do that.

One of the things that I wanted to mention—and I think my colleagues who were speaking earlier were referring to some of the voices who had supported this—is that there's a joint statement from the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, the John Howard Society of Ontario, the Ontario Nonprofit Network and the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police. They had a joint statement, and I think that speaks to the collaborative nature of how this bill that I was speaking about earlier was developed, how it engages all stakeholders. I just want to read that to you, Speaker: "Good news for Ontario workers, volunteers, students, non-profits and businesses that will now see more consistent information released in police record checks."

I think that's really good news. They talk about the consistency there. The consistency is important, to ensure that people know what they can expect, and what's been done here is that this is going to apply to jurisdictions across Ontario, which is really critical.

One of the things I also wanted to speak to was the specifics of what the bill does. I've talked about it at a high level, but the specifics are built in here.

I think I'm going to pass on my time to the member for Scarborough Southwest, to finish off the time I have.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Scarborough Southwest.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to stand up and have a few words to say on this bill.

I want to say one quick thing: My experience was that when I was a city councillor at the city of Toronto, there was quite a bit of hostility between certain groups and the police. There was a concern that the police were keeping records of everything, and that they would last forever and could be released at any time.

This legislation basically standardizes the procedure, not just in Toronto but in all of Ontario, which is only fair. People sometimes look at the police with—they're afraid, or they don't like the police, and they are afraid that records or information will be released: for example, carding, or also that people will be arrested but not convicted. We have to protect that fact, to make sure that if someone is arrested, it doesn't come out automatically to anyone who wants that information. An arrest is very different from a conviction.

If I have more time to speak later, I will talk about other aspects of this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: First of all, this bill changes the name from "criminal reference check" to "police record check." That's the start of what this is really all about, our volunteers throughout the province and throughout the country who give of their time. This is an opportunity for their organizations to have a police record check done on them.

Our party supports the rights of all Ontarians to be treated fairly and equally. This brings consistency to police record checks and follows the recommendation of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, the Ontario Human Rights Commission and other groups. The bill specifies that individuals have the opportunity to review their police record check before deciding to release that information to the requester, as well.

There are three types: the criminal record check, the criminal record and judicial matters check, and the vulnerable sector check. Outside of the vulnerable sector check, the act will prohibit the release of non-conviction records for criminal record checks or for criminal record and judicial matter checks. This will also help with the screening of individuals for certain purposes. This does not interfere with the collection and the sharing of information by police services across other law enforcement agencies.

Speaker, again, we do support the rights of all Ontarians to be treated fairly and equally.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: This is an important debate. This legislation is needed, and it has been a long time coming. We're going to be supportive of it getting to committee, but we do think there is room for improvement in the legislation.

I found it interesting that the member from Etobicoke Centre mentioned the John Howard Society. The John Howard Society has some outstanding concerns with regard to this legislation going forward, primarily around those records of conviction and then the non-conviction records.

Non-conviction, of course, refers to all contact with police where a record is taken, which does happen, including criminal matters before the courts that result in acquittal, or are diverted; and where a conviction is to be expunged, including being a witness to an event, or even instances where someone may be in mental health distress that results in police contact and that does not result in a conviction or even charges.

We can't ignore the fact that information recorded from the equally controversial practice of police carding, or what some people regard as street checks, would fall into this as well. It shouldn't be factored into police non-conviction record checks to employers, universities, governments and volunteer organizations.

We need to give credit where credit is due. The Toronto Star broke this story back in May 2014, where the abuse of records was happening. Personal information was being collected. In some instances, a person's name would be attributed to a criminal activity even when they were just a witness to that activity. That's particularly worrisome for youth in our society today.

It's noted that school boards across the province would definitely like to be part of the guidelines going forward. I think they're an important resource to reach out to. They have the youth voice first and foremost, so let's make sure they're part of the consultation process.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Scarborough—Rouge River.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I'm pleased to add a few comments. Let me say that the government is introducing this legislation for a significant purpose, and the purpose is—currently, municipal police forces, provincial police forces and other organizations that release record checks are inconsistent in what they release. That has caused a lot of problems. We've had public consultation, and we've heard the problems they've caused numerous people, many in terms of seeking employment, volunteering or even trying to obtain entry to an educational institution. It has caused a lot of difficulty for the public. This is an important piece of legislation for the government, because we will standardize the process across the province: what can be released in a criminal record check, a criminal record and judicial matters check, and a vulnerable sector check.

Mr. Speaker, I will tell you that in my own riding, I've heard from many young people. I'm sure every member of this House has probably had the same experience over the years that they've been in office, where a young person has graduated from university as a social worker and they're attempting to obtain employment, and a record released by the institution to an employer had information where they've had contact with police just for questioning or been brought in as part of an investigation because they had information that helped the police. For that to affect someone getting employment—none of us pictured that that would have happened, but it was happening.

I think this is something that the public will embrace, and they're looking forward to us implementing it as soon as possible.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: It's a pleasure to speak to this bill. This bill is very worthy and well intentioned in that it tries to balance the need to reveal important information to employers, especially in the area of looking after young children, mentally ill people, senior citizens, vulnerable people, people that do need help—but we don't want them to suffer abuses from the wrong kind of people.

1620

The police checks—or they're now going to be called police record checks instead of criminal reference checks or record checks—they've retitled it as a more sensitive, appropriate title, which is a reflection of the intent of what we're trying to do in this bill: trying to be considerate of the people that might have a bit of a record, or not, but if there is a record and it's a non-conviction, that it not interfere with their ability to obtain employment or to do volunteer work. Volunteers are the heart and core of our communities and do an awful lot of the work of looking after the needy citizens in our communities, and we don't want to discourage that. We don't want to embarrass people and therefore discourage them.

Sometimes a little indiscretion in somebody's life in the past that is no true reflection on their true character can be destroying to them in the case of where it's revealed to an employer looking after needy people, and it becomes something that's totally unacceptable. Word like that can get out in the community and can be very destructive to a person's reputation, and that needs to be stopped. We have to be very careful with what information gets released. It's good to see that a person seeking employment, whether it's volunteer or paid employment, can see the records that are going to be released. This is a most worthy bill, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Etobicoke Centre has two minutes.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate the comments from the members opposite on this. It sounds like there's a lot of support for what's trying to be achieved through this piece of legislation.

The bill, first of all, tries to defend some key rights and key principles that, really, we need to uphold in our society around public safety, making sure that people are safe, particularly our vulnerable populations, while at the same time protecting people's right to privacy and protecting the presumption of innocence, which is really important.

I think the bill is pragmatic in how it approaches things in that it tries to allow for more of a release of information when appropriate, under very limited circumstances, when vulnerable populations are concerned. In cases like when we have children involved or seniors involved and a person is going to be working with children or seniors, it's important that that person undergo additional scrutiny. But in many cases, that additional scrutiny is not necessary. As the member for Mississippi Mills mentioned, it's important that a moment of indiscretion that's not reflective, and frankly not material to a person's employment or a person's capacity to pursue a post-secondary education or whatever the case may be, not be used against them for the rest of their lives.

One of the things that we value in our society is the fact that we put public safety first, but we do so while respecting the rights of people, and we treat privacy and the presumption of innocence seriously. I think this bill attempts to strike that balance.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a privilege and a pleasure to rise in the House today and speak to this bill, Bill 113, the Police Record Checks Reform Act, 2015. As the honourable member from Ottawa Centre noted when he introduced this bill, the intent of the police record check is to create a province-wide standard for police record checks and eliminate the practice of disclosing non-criminal records.

Rather than keep the members in this House in suspense this afternoon, I'll tell you off the get-go that we will be supporting this bill when it's called for second reading vote.

I certainly believe, as do my colleagues in the official opposition, that it is our duty in this Legislature to put forward legislation that supports the rights of all Ontarians to be treated fairly and equally.

Bill 113 has been drafted with the intent of ending the unnecessary sharing of non-conviction information that is stored in the ever-growing information databases of our police and security services. It is my understanding that once this bill is passed, only information pertaining to convictions under the Criminal Code of Canada or information that can be justified as relevant for those individuals who will be interacting with the vulnerable sector will be accessible through police checks.

Further, this legislation is based upon recommendations by the Ontario police chiefs, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, the Canadian Mental Health Association, the John Howard Society, Legal Aid Ontario and many others too numerous to mention. My office hasn't been contacted by any of these groups, or others, to voice

their opposition to this act. I would hope this means that these groups are satisfied that they were listened to during the consultation process, which I would note is the exception rather than the rule with most of the bills that this government has put forward.

However, during my eight years as member of provincial Parliament for Sarnia-Lambton, my office has heard from many constituents, on a number of occasions, who have had difficulty with the police check system.

The requirement for job applicants and volunteers to have a police check completed before they can move forward in the selection process is becoming more and more commonplace in Ontario. Many organizations seem to be requiring police checks from applicants as a way to mitigate the risk when taking on a new employee or volunteer. Mr. Speaker, I think that many organizations have put this policy in place with good intentions, but the application itself may be leading to the best candidates for positions not always being selected. However, this practice will most certainly continue, and will likely grow in the future.

It probably won't be long before organizations are asking for some sort of social media background checks, and if we've followed the news in recent weeks, we'd understand why.

That aside, it is important that the provincial government take the time now to make sure that police record checks are being handled appropriately, that an individual's personal information is being carefully protected, and that only the relevant details are being shared by police agencies with employers and organizations.

I had the chance to make a few comments on Bill 113 when it was debated in the Legislature recently. I want to reiterate what I said then, like many others: that this legislation could be strengthened even further by adopting, as an amendment, the private member's bill put forward by my colleague the member for Dufferin-Caledon. This member has done a lot of great work on the issue of police checks for those wishing to volunteer. Her bill, Bill 79, the Helping Volunteers Give Back Act, states:

"An organization that retains the services of a volunteer is prohibited from requiring a criminal record check for the volunteer, as a condition for the volunteer's starting work with the organization, if the organization receives a criminal record check for the volunteer that is dated within the year before the day on which the volunteer starts work with the organization and that is the most recent criminal record check that the volunteer has obtained. The criminal record check must meet the authenticity requirements specified by the regulations made under the act. The organization can also require the volunteer to provide notice of all pending criminal proceedings and the final disposition of those proceedings.

"After a volunteer starts work with an organization, the organization can require a new criminal record check from the volunteer dated at yearly intervals. In addition, the organization can require a criminal record check for a volunteer at any time if the organization has actual notice

or reasonable grounds to believe that a conviction for an offence has been added to the volunteer's criminal record since the date of the most recent criminal record check for the volunteer that the organization has received.

"When a police force releases a criminal record check for a volunteer, whether to an organization or to the volunteer, the police force is required to release a maximum of five additional originals of the check to the volunteer at no additional charge if the volunteer so requests."

It's my understanding that these record checks can cost upwards of \$40 and \$50, and you have to have an original. If someone was doing a job search, it could be quite expensive for them to get these original police checks. I think there has to be some leeway there.

I know that the Helping Volunteers Give Back Act is not what we're debating today, but I believe that if its principles were added as an amendment to this bill, Bill 113, during committee, the resulting piece of legislation would better serve the residents of Ontario. At the end of the day, that's why we're all here.

Right now, a regular police check in my community of Sarnia-Lambton, by the Sarnia Police Service, costs an applicant \$43, and you're only given one copy of that police check for your use. For individuals who may want to volunteer with multiple organizations, or if they are job-hunting and are lucky enough to get multiple interviews, having to pay for multiple police checks will quickly become an expensive proposition.

1630

In his comments during the introduction of this bill, the honourable member from Ottawa Centre indicated that this bill would increase employment and volunteer opportunities. For that truly to happen, I think that something needs to be done to reduce the financial burden that is associated right now with police checks.

I would also like to point out that there is a history of members from this side of the House putting forward great ideas to strengthen government bills. I was fortunate enough to put forward an amendment, during committee work on the Local Food Act, to create a tax credit for farmers who donate to local food banks. The government, the third party and the official opposition debated that, voted on it and that amendment was adopted. As a result, I understand it is making a dramatic impact in communities across the province.

In my own riding of Sarnia-Lambton, the local food bank has indicated to me that this year alone they have agreements with six local farmers who now are providing fresh produce to the food bank and its mobile market, which makes many stops throughout Sarnia-Lambton. In addition, there have been very generous donations by the local pork producers, chicken farmers and dairy farmers, so clients now have access to healthy protein as well. That was a result of that amendment being adopted by the government from my private member's bill.

Back to the Police Record Checks Reform Act: As it stands, Bill 113 seeks to establish a framework around police checks for the first time, after years of calls for

legislation from police and civil liberties groups. Hopefully, by creating a standard framework for all police forces to follow, we will see a reduction in the time it takes to complete a police check.

I had my staff look into the calls we received in our office about police check issues. The majority of concerns had to do with the amount of time it takes to receive a police check once an application is submitted. Some constituents are facing waits of up to six weeks or more for their police checks. This could certainly be detrimental for those who have a standing job offer, for whom wait times of over a month and a half or more are certainly not helpful. In fact, that would likely produce a lot of anxiety for both the applicant and the potential employer.

The spouse of one of my staff members actually went through one of these extended wait periods a few years ago. After securing a job offer at a local children's treatment centre in Sarnia-Lambton, the spouse of my staff member contacted the Toronto Police Service, where they were living at the time, to obtain a police check. It took over four months for the Toronto Police Service to complete the check and return it. When the organization that was waiting on the police check called the Toronto Police Service to find out why the process was taking so long, the desk officer told the human resources manager—get this, Mr. Speaker—that they found it suspicious that someone would actually move from Toronto to Sarnia, so a more thorough check was being conducted.

For those of us who spend most of the week here, Toronto is a great place. But I find it hard that someone would suspect someone wanting to move from this great city to a great place like Sarnia-Lambton or some other great community like Hamilton or Ottawa.

I hope this story illustrates just one of the frustrating aspects of the current police check system. Right now, there is no guide for police departments to follow. Each department decides what it wants to do, and citizens who are forced to go through the process are left to wait and wonder what is going on. By establishing a clear framework for police services of what to include in a police record check, I am hopeful that the processing time for police checks can be reduced.

Back to the points on Bill 113, the government is proposing three types of checks through this legislation. These checks would include the following information:

(1) The criminal record check itself: criminal convictions and findings of guilt under the Youth Criminal Justice Act. That's a criminal records check.

(2) Criminal record and judicial matters check: a criminal record check plus outstanding charges, arrest warrants, certain judicial orders, absolute discharges, conditional discharges, and other records as authorized by the Criminal Records Act.

(3) A vulnerable sector check: a criminal record and judicial matters check, plus findings of not criminally responsible due to a mental disorder, record suspensions or pardons related to sexually based offences and non-

conviction information related to the predation of a child or other vulnerable person—that is to say, charges that were withdrawn, dismissed or stayed, or that resulted in acquittals.

The definition of a vulnerable person:

“a person who, because of his or her age, a disability or other circumstances, whether temporary or permanent,

“(a) is in a position of dependency on others, or

“(b) is otherwise at a greater risk than the general population of being harmed by a person in a position of trust or authority towards them.”

A vulnerable sector check is performed in cases where an individual would be in an employment or volunteer position of trust or authority over children or other vulnerable persons.

This bill would also put into place rules for how police record checks are released. My colleague the member for Chatham-Kent-Essex touched on this aspect of the bill earlier this week in his remarks, and I believe it bears repeating. There have been numerous stories in the Toronto newspapers and happenings in my riding regarding non-conviction records being placed on an individual's file in various police databases. These records may include charges that were laid against an individual but were later dropped or could not be proven in court. It was noted in a previous debate on this bill that as of 2005, there were more than 420,000 people—almost a half a million people—listed in the RCMP's Canadian Police Information Centre, otherwise known as CPIC, but there being no conviction on their record.

We have also learned through media reports of situations where a person has received attention for mental health issues and they now find themselves with notations on their file—notations that can and are negatively impacting their lives.

By and large, I believe the general reaction of Ontarians when they learn of these sorts of non-conviction police records—they are concerned. Most individuals would assume that if an individual has not committed a crime or if they were cleared of any wrongdoing, their record would be wiped clean. That, unfortunately, is not the case in Ontario.

As part of this bill, an individual will have the opportunity to review their police record check for information before deciding to release it. This would certainly be helpful for those interested in finding out what is on their record. Most people would not be aware that they had a non-conviction police record until it's too late. For example, one may find out when they are rejected for an employment opportunity or turned away at the American border. As I come from a border community, again, this is an issue that we have heard about in my constituency office.

I told this story the other day during a hit, but it's relevant to this point, so I'll tell it again. A number of years ago, my wife and I and a number of other couples went for a vacation in the Caribbean—long before I got elected, because now we don't have time to do anything like that, my wife would say. On the way back, we

crossed the border at Sarnia with a number of individuals in a van. We cleared customs quite easily. It was only after we got home—and I'm glad I didn't know beforehand, because it might have made me a little nervous—I found out from a now-retired border patrol officer, who I actually went to school with—I won't say any more about that—that someone had made an anonymous call to the bridge and said that a number of individuals were returning from a trip. I was one of them and they named some of the other people—I won't go into their names—and that we were probably smuggling something back.

This person, who knew me very well, said, "Look, I know Bob Bailey and he wouldn't be doing anything like that," and they threw it aside. I was fortunate that that happened—

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Somebody said, "Wrong guy." I think they're heckling me, Mr. Speaker.

They threw it aside, but I was fortunate that the person knew me and made a decision that they didn't think that was right. That might have been written up. I don't know what the process is at border crossings, but I assume that if we had been pulled in and run through the gamut of whatever they do there, that could be on someone's file, right?

I never knew that for at least a year or so after that. Researching this and going through this made me think about that again. I hadn't thought about it for probably 15 years or more. But that's how someone could make mischief anonymously, on some people who were very innocent. Thank God that they didn't follow through on that.

It's troubling to learn that it's simple for someone to have a suspicious note like that added to your personal file, so that every time you go through Canadian customs, it gives the officer a reason to pull you in for an inspection.

1640

I would certainly be interested to know if that is on my police record, and I think I'll check it when I get this done. I think it's probably not on there, because I held a number of different positions, prior to being elected, where you had to have an RCMP check. So I don't think it's probably on there, because I had some order-in-council appointment positions that I have filled, and I don't think I would have got them if that was on my file.

Mr. Speaker, everyone who is watching today should be asking themselves what could possibly be on their file that they don't know about. Imagine the shock of being rejected on the basis of your police record if you have never been convicted of a crime, or if you have paid for a trip with your family and you're prepared to go across the border, and all of a sudden you're turned back. We've heard about that in the media lots of times recently. This is an issue that concerns a number of Ontarians right now under the current system. There's often no way to know if you have a record until one day you find out with such a rejection.

A record with a non-conviction could impact your ability to find a better job, volunteer, obtain higher education or even rent an apartment. That is why I am encouraged to see, as part of this bill, that section 10 includes a provision that will allow an individual to file for reconsideration of a decision to release non-conviction information that may be set to be released to the public.

Subsection 10(4) states: "If the individual submits a request for reconsideration in accordance with the regulations, the provider shall, within 30 days after receiving the reconsideration request, reconsider its determination in accordance with any requirements prescribed by the minister."

The bill goes on to say, at subsection 15(1): "Every police record check provider shall create and implement a process to respond to a request from an individual to correct information in respect of the individual if the individual believes there is an error or omission in the information."

Mr. Speaker, these avenues of appeal are a good thing. However, the bill does leave the matter of how the reconsideration process is handled to the individual police departments. That could create a greater degree of variance between the different departments in the province, and of course the intent of this bill is to standardize the process of obtaining a police check for the individual, but also for the police departments, so that unnecessary and irrelevant personal information is not released.

In summary, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that I will be supporting this bill at second reading. I believe there has been great work done in listening to the various police services and civil liberties groups to address their concerns with this legislation. I think that when we get it to committee, we can probably make even more improvements to it. It should remove the guesswork and reduce the frustration associated with a police record check. More importantly, it will do a better job of protecting the very personal non-conviction information of individuals that is housed on these various police service databases.

All that being said, I still believe there is room for improvement in this bill. I am hopeful, Mr. Speaker, that the government will allow that discussion to take place at committee, and that they will be open to some of the opposition members' suggestions.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your indulgence.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: This is a very important bill, and it sounds like we have the same line of thought, between members, that privacy is important, and that the kind of information that is being collected under police record checks is affecting people in different opportunities—we talked about employment and educational opportunities, as well as rental housing opportunities. Sometimes people need police checks for that as well. Insurance—that can impact you as well. So there are various parts of people's lives where you might think it is incidental, but it really will change the outcome of some things you enter into.

Speaker, the other part of that: Different police forces in different cities, perhaps, have different procedures, and there are inconsistencies, maybe, in what one force would put on a police check compared to another. The same thing with the Ontario Nonprofit Network: They talked about their organization receiving this information, how it's interpreted and how it's stored in their facilities. When they get this information, what do they do with it, once you know there's something on someone's police record check?

The Ontario Nonprofit Network talked about it, and we touched on this. It's definitely a privacy issue, it's definitely a human rights issue and it also can be extended to a community safety issue. When it's not a Criminal Code conviction, Speaker, I think this is a bill that really is a good idea and addresses that part of people's lives. Things can happen: 15 years ago, we've used the mental health issues; we've used people who are falsely accused and acquitted. Those things should not be revealed. They're not criminal and they shouldn't have to be passed on after years and years of being buried. A lot of people who find out that they are on there are completely surprised.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member for his comments.

The bill is about trying to achieve balance. I would say that would be one of the components of the legislation that we're trying to achieve. It's not an easy thing to do on an issue as sensitive as this, but it sounds like perhaps the minister has struck the right balance on this.

I'm listening carefully here this afternoon and hearing good and broad support from all speakers on all sides of the House. The official opposition and the third party, as well, are speaking in support of the bill. I think that's good and speaks to the fact that perhaps the minister has struck the right balance here.

The short quote that's here, a joint statement from the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, the John Howard Society, the Ontario Nonprofit Network and the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police: It's a very brief and short statement. I think we could say that it is reflective of other organizations. Again I say: Perhaps we are achieving the right balance.

We are, of course, trying to balance the rights of the individual to privacy and security of their information and also the rights of individuals who potentially could be victims and fall prey to the people who are the subject of the record check. I think we are all likely aware of some very high-profile cases. We can all think of examples of National Hockey League players who have expressed their personal stories. I can remember, Speaker, meeting Sheldon Kennedy quite some time ago on his cross-country tour, when he spoke very publicly, very courageously, about his personal experiences. I think he was an individual who came forward and perhaps was one of the first that led to more light being shone on examples like this.

Again, it's about trying to achieve balance, recognizing the harm that can fall upon people who can potentially become victims of people who are put in their care and control. It's about balance and the consistency of the records and information released by police forces. It sounds like we're getting there.

It's a good piece, and I thank the members for their support.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to have an opportunity to speak briefly to Bill 113, An Act respecting police record checks, and comment on the speech from the member from Sarnia-Lambton. Certainly, he put a lot of thought into his speech and brought up some interesting issues on this bill.

I think probably the issue that I've heard more about in my constituency office with regard to police checks is the time limit issue. That's one that was brought up by the member from Sarnia-Lambton. You have situations where people perhaps just want to volunteer for minor hockey or Scouts, Cubs, Girl Guides, and part of the requirement is to have a record check. It just takes a long time, in many cases.

More importantly, he brought up that the issue is when it's a requirement for getting a job that they have a check done. As he mentioned, it can sometimes take up to six weeks, which, really, I think, is far too long. It's problematic if someone is waiting around to get that check done in order to get their job.

The other issue he brought up was cost. He says that, in Sarnia, it's \$43 for each check. If you have to get a bunch of checks done for various positions, it can get pretty expensive. I think the timeliness is one that I hope is improved upon by this bill. I'm not sure that is the case.

As has been stated, the PC caucus does support the bill, and the PC caucus supports the rights of all Ontarians to be treated fairly and equally. It does not support the release of non-criminal information, such as mental-health-related information. These matters are personal and private and should not be disclosed when no charges have been laid against an individual.

Mr. Speaker, that's all I have time for now. Thank you to the member for his comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to stand in the House and, today, to follow the member from Sarnia-Lambton on his remarks on the Police Record Checks Reform Act. He did bring up a lot of good points.

1650

I know in my constituency office where it comes to pass most is with the volunteers. It's hard to get volunteers in my part of the country, I think as it is in most of the province, perhaps all of the province. And when you get people who want to volunteer, and the record check system is very lengthy, is sufficiently costly—because many volunteers do volunteer at two or three or four

organizations. People who like to volunteer, they volunteer a lot. They are pillars in their community, and they end up paying quite a bit of money.

A complaint I've had come to my office a few times is that with some of these checks, fingerprints are involved and they're asked to re-fingerprint after three years, I believe, for some of the checks. The question is, why? Did the people's fingerprints change? It's a good question, because where I live, you have to go a fair ways to get this done. It's a good question: Do they really need to be re-fingerprinted after three years for a routine check for a volunteer organization?

It's a fine balance. We want to make sure that with people who volunteer, there are no bad apples and everything is safe. But we also want to make sure that people who really want to do good in their community aren't overburdened by things that don't really make it safer.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Sarnia—Lambton has two minutes.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was thinking that there was one more hit coming. I'm prepared anyway.

I want to thank the member for London—Fanshawe, the Minister of Natural Resources, the member from Parry Sound—Muskoka and also the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane.

It was interesting reading this and doing the research that took place on the bill. I looked forward to it. As the one member said, it's hard to get volunteers anymore, anyway, and with liability, it gets people thinking about risk, when you have to go through these police record checks. You might think that some issue from your misspent youth might come back to haunt you—you know, that you forgot about, yourself. So I think it's good that we're able to access these now, if this bill comes to fruition. People will actually have the ability to see what's in their record, have it corrected if it's wrong—work some way of forgiveness, somehow to get it corrected; and if it's wrong, look to have it removed, have it corrected. Because we do need volunteers. We couldn't run the province without them.

I got thinking about that \$43 cost—whatever it is, \$43 or \$50—for a record check. That's another thing. Imagine how much that's being subsidized by the taxpayers, because there is no earthly way that those OPP officers, in the case of Sarnia—Lambton—or whether it's the metro police or whatever—could do that, because I know how long they take to do those things. I have family members who are involved, and I never really thought about it before, but I know \$43 or \$50 wouldn't touch it. It's probably three times that for their time, because they don't get it all done on the first day; they might be doing a half a dozen.

Anyway, thank you again, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to the bill. I look forward to the rest of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like to rise on Bill 113, the Police Record Checks Reform Act, 2015—I'm proud to

stand here today and speak to this very important bill, the Police Record Checks Reform Act.

I'd like to start by thanking the government for bringing this bill forward. It's not often that I feel the need to do that, but this is a very important bill. I'm very happy to see it coming forward. The government has done good work by introducing this bill, and I would like to acknowledge that.

I'd also like to mention the member from Bramalea—Gore—Malton, who has done a lot of great work around this issue as well.

This bill seeks to right a wrong that has been going on in our province for too long. This bill will ensure that when the Canadian Police Information Centre does a record check, in most cases, only conviction records will be passed on in our communities.

That's a good thing. Too many people have been denied opportunities because of interaction with police that did not result in a conviction, when a non-conviction record wound up on a criminal record check. People have been denied opportunities for housing, for employment, for volunteering and opportunities to simply try to better themselves.

What is a non-conviction record, and why is it important to keep them off of criminal record checks? A conviction record is pretty straightforward: Any time someone is convicted of a crime through the due process provided by our court system, a record of that conviction is put on file under that name. That makes sense. If you have your due process and a judge or a jury has decided that, on balance, there is evidence beyond a reasonable doubt that you committed a crime, you should be convicted. We should keep that on record.

According to a report by the John Howard Society entitled *Reducing Barriers for Ontario's Youth with Police Records*—this is kind of staggering; I was surprised at this number myself—over 4.1 million Canadians have a record of criminal conviction that is on their record. That's a pretty staggering number, which raises a whole host of other issues, but it makes sense to record who those people are and what they've been convicted of.

On the other hand, non-conviction records are not so straightforward. The same report by the John Howard Society notes that each year in Ontario, our criminal court system processes more than half a million charges. Think about that: half a million charges. But of the half-million charges that are processed annually, close to 43% of them result in stayed or withdrawn charges.

That's important, because it's the first type of non-conviction record that we think about. If you are charged with a crime, then have those charges stayed or withdrawn in the courts, a record of that is still created. That means that each year in Ontario, more than 200,000 people are having non-conviction records put on their files. I believe that that creates a problem, and I'm proud to stand here today to speak on a bill that will help address the problem that it creates.

If it were just 200,000 Ontarians every year who were having non-conviction records attached to their file, this

would still be an issue. Unfortunately, it's bigger than that. There are more ways that someone can have a non-conviction record put on their file.

I'll refer again to the John Howard Society here, who have given us a short list of what we are talking about when we talk about non-conviction records. Those records can be from a 911 call for assistance, from the fact that you are a victim of a crime, from a mental health crisis that involved contacting the police, from being questioned by the police in relation to a crime or, as I already mentioned, from arrests or charges that did not result in a conviction.

1700

Now, it is currently the last three issues I mentioned that are causing the most concern for civil liberties groups, community organizations, police chiefs and not-for-profit organizations: the issues of police contact in a mental health crisis, being questioned by police not in relation to a crime and arrest or a charge, again, that didn't result in a conviction. Let's not kid ourselves about who that is impacting. In the majority of cases, those street checks are done on young people living in poor areas of Toronto. Often, those young men are first- or second-generation Canadians whose parents work multiple jobs and still struggle to keep food on the table and a roof over their heads. I think we can all agree that those hard-working Canadians face enough barriers in trying to build a better life for themselves and their children already. It is the least we can do to stop adding barriers in their lives, and I really do mean it's the least we can do.

Now that we know what non-conviction records are, I think it's time we talk a little about why their disclosure on police record checks is such a problem and why this bill is so necessary.

First, the disclosure of non-conviction records seems to violate one of the fundamental pillars of our justice system. In Canada, we all have the right to presumption of innocence. It is very clearly laid out and protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Section 11(d) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms states, "Any person charged with an offence has the right ... to be presumed innocent until proven guilty according to law in a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal...." I want to draw your attention to the fact that this clause relates to someone charged with an offence. Someone who has been charged with an offence must be presumed innocent until proven guilty. The problem we are facing here today is that the people who have not even been charged with a crime are facing barriers in their lives because of it. We all understand that, for those who are listening. We all understand that, Mr. Speaker, about the barriers to their lives.

They are facing barriers to get jobs. We've heard this a lot here this afternoon, from the Conservatives, from the Liberals and from every speaker who has spoken on this issue—barriers to jobs but also to accepting volunteer positions and going to school, not because they have been charged, let alone convicted of a crime, but

because the police had stopped them. I believe, and I believe most MPPs think the same way, that that is such a blatant disregard for section 11(d) of the charter that it's almost astonishing.

I don't want to give the impression that I think the police or employers or schools are purposely disregarding the charter; quite frankly, far from it. All those people do great work and help a lot of people, and we certainly shouldn't take that away from them. But what is now common practice, the disclosure of non-conviction records as part of police checks, is a serious problem, and partially because it conflicts with the charter. It really and truly is something that we need to address now.

If you are someone whose life experiences taught you not to trust the police, if you live in a community where a police presence seems threatening rather than seeming to increase your safety, and you have issues, is that going to help you trust the police? Is that going to make you more likely to call police officers if you need them? Think about that. If you have a mental health issue and you call the police to get help, it's then going to be put on your file, so when you go to volunteer or you go to coach a hockey team or you go across the border, that's going to show up. So you end up not calling the police and getting the help you need.

Of course, those are all somewhat abstract concepts when what this issue is really about is the human impact of this policy. The impact of disclosure of non-conviction records is what this is all about. The barriers that have been created that stop hard-working Ontarians, especially young people, from pursuing their dreams of a new job, a better education, or even the opportunity to volunteer and help out in their communities—something that is very rewarding, that most of us in this room probably do. That is the human impact of the disclosure of non-conviction records on police checks, and that is what needs to be stopped from happening in our great province of Ontario.

Applause.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you. I was kind of hoping one of the Liberals would clap, but I'm not sure they're paying attention to me. But it is what it is.

Applause.

Mr. Wayne Gates: All right. Thank you. There you go.

My colleagues the members from Bramalea-Gore-Malton and Oshawa have already shared with you a number of stories about what the human impact is. I won't share any more with you today, but I ask you all to look back and remember the stories of Gord, Robin, Lana and Chris as we move ahead with this debate. Remember those stories—because that is what this bill is working to fix. It's going to put a stop to the disclosure of non-conviction records on police checks. That is going to help eliminate barriers for employment, for volunteer opportunities and for education that are faced far too often by the people of this province.

This bill gets a good number of things right. It prohibits the disclosure of non-conviction records in most cases, while recognizing that in some cases, those records

could be disclosed as an exceptional disclosure. It governs three types of record checks: criminal record checks, criminal record and judicial matters checks, and vulnerable sector checks. It sets out a framework for police non-conviction record checks, though it leaves much of the substance of that to regulations. And it sets time limits, which is equally important, on the non-conviction information released.

1710

These are all good things, and I'm happy to see the government finally bringing them forward. It's clear that the intense public and stakeholder scrutiny for years around this issue has finally paid off. The government is listening to the people of this province and taking action to right a wrong. I only wish that they would do the same on some other files and listen to the more than 80% of the people of Ontario who oppose the reckless privatization of Hydro One.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Zing!

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'm glad you're here. I thought for sure you'd say something, so that's good.

While there are a number of good things in the bill, there is also some room for improvement, as there is with most bills. I would like to use my last few minutes to discuss one of the areas where that improvement would be most beneficial. The area that I want to draw your attention to is around the exceptional disclosure provision for the release of non-conviction records. This provision provides that in some circumstances, records that would otherwise not be allowed to be released can be released.

I understand why this is necessary, and I don't believe that the provision needs to be entirely removed. In fact, I was glad to see that the bill already provides for time limitations on how the provision can be applied. However, this provision still does present an issue that is twofold: First, there is an issue of transparency and accountability in the decision-making process about when those records can be released. As it stands currently, those records are created by the police, stored by the police and would be evaluated and released by the police. Unfortunately, that practice is plagued by a lack of transparency and accountability. There is no independent body that can say, "Hold on a second. Something isn't quite right here."

Now, that is not to speak ill of our police services. The police in this province are some of the best in the world. They do incredible work every single day and are some of the bravest and hardest-working women and men I know. But through no fault of their own, they are being put in a situation that, as I said, lacks transparency and accountability.

The other side of this issue around the provision for exceptional disclosure relates to what records are released as part of that disclosure. The issue here is that there might be some cases where an exceptional disclosure is looked at and the records that are then disclosed have nothing to do with the position being applied for.

Let me give you an example. Let's say someone is applying to work with a senior—I see my time is going to

run out. I'll maybe have to finish that little bit of a story up in my two minutes.

Thank you very much for giving me a few minutes to speak on the issue, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim McDonell): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I'm happy to provide a few comments based on the member on the opposite side speaking. I want to commend him because I think he covered just about every major section of Bill 113. Most of his comments were all positive, that the government is doing the right thing with this particular bill. I've sat in the House and listened to several people, across the way and in my own party, and they're all complimentary of the bill. I think the public is also complimentary of this bill, so I hope that we will move forward and approve this bill as quickly as possible.

But let me say something that's very important in this bill, which was not quite covered clearly: Currently, when you apply for a record check—or a criminal record check or a police check, as many people will call it—it's issued to the body that requested it. The person whose record is being checked may not get a copy of it and may not be aware of what has been released. The legislation in front of you ensures that the person whose record is being compiled receives that record first, gets an opportunity to review it and also has an opportunity to request a review from the issuing body. Then there's an appeal process if they're not happy.

I think this particular legislation goes quite a ways to correct something that was out there that affected the young people, especially, in our community, and some adults, but I would say mostly the young people who were trying to volunteer or get a job or enter an educational institution. They would have had problems in the past and they will no longer have that, so I think it's a good thing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim McDonell): The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's quite the delight to see you in the chair today, Mr. Speaker. You're doing a fine job, I might say.

It's a pleasure to bring comments on my colleague from Niagara Falls. I echo what the last speaker just said. I think he did a very good job of covering most of the points in there. I'm actually going to spend a few minutes bringing the ideas and thoughts of my constituents to the floor shortly, but I just wanted to state that I think this is a good piece of legislation. It is something that we all need.

Volunteers are truly the backbone of everything we do in our communities. We could not function as a province the way we do without our volunteers. Most of this, I believe, is really for the intended purpose of protecting our children and our youth. A lot of us in our volunteer capacities have interaction with our youth and with our next generation. I think the whole intent of all police checks at one point was probably for making sure that we have people who are appropriately there to be governing them.

What I hear in my community is that there are needs to amend some of those. Some of the things that I'm going to talk about are the duplication of efforts, the duplication if you happen to volunteer for a lot of activities. I know, Mr. Speaker, that you were very involved over your years in your community; you have played a lot of key roles. One of the things we want to do is not unduly burden the system with a lot of repetitious checks. We don't want to have to go back 15 times if you happen to be a volunteer for 15 different organizations. We want to streamline that, so that obviously there is due diligence, to ensure that there's a proper check done, but we don't want to overburden the police services and all of their employees, whether they be civilian personnel or actual police officers. A lot of time and energy can be spent doing these types of checks.

The one thing I'm going to talk about a fair bit in there is the non-conviction records. People don't even realize what's in a check or what could be part of a check, and that could have the unintended consequence of creating some negative challenges.

I applaud the speaker. I applaud everyone in here today. It's been pretty positive. I look forward to adding my two cents in a few more minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim McDonell): The member from Kitchener—Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'd just like to commend the member from Niagara Falls. I think he raised the issue, first and foremost, of why this legislation is needed and then couched it within the risk that we need to be cognizant of going forward. I appreciate the fact that he gave a shout-out to the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton, who has been a leader in this.

It's important for us to recap: There have been nearly 2,500 with no convictions registered who had a notation for attempted suicide, and another 2,200 had a notation for mental instability with no convictions. Those are actually current on the record right now. I think having a mental instability should not qualify you as being a criminal. This is an illness, and we all know that in this day and age.

It's also worth noting that innocent victims of police disclosures, along with lawyers, academics, social justice advocates and privacy experts, are calling for legislation that would bring clarity to what information can and can't be released by police in background checks, so this legislation is timely.

Ann Cavoukian, Ontario's privacy commissioner, said that when that breach of privacy happens through a non-conviction order, "This ruins lives." She is supportive of "new laws or amendments to current legislation that clearly instructs police forces on what they can release to employers, volunteer organizations and governments."

It's very rare that we are all in this House on an afternoon and we all agree that something should happen and that this legislation is timely and that it is needed.

Finally, from the same article that was in the Toronto Star—this is one of the stories that broke this issue and raised awareness—I'm sure we all agree that, "There

should be no information about non-convicted people in CPIC. CPIC is supposed to be and should be and ought to be a Canadian police information database for the purposes of identifying your criminal history."

That is the issue that needs to be clarified going forward with this piece of legislation.

1720

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim McDonell): The member for Davenport.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I'm pleased to rise today to speak on this bill, Bill 113, police record checks. We are proud to have tabled the Police Record Checks Reform Act last spring.

In a joint statement—I believe it's been referred to here, but I thought it was worthy to mention it again—from the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, the John Howard Society of Ontario, the Ontario Nonprofit Network and the Association of Chiefs of Police: This bill is, "Good news for Ontario workers, volunteers, students, non-profits and businesses that will now see more consistent information released in police record checks."

It builds on the LEARN guidelines, which were developed by policing, civil liberties, mental health, community safety, non-profit and business partners and are already being followed by approximately 70% of police forces across the province.

This legislation ensures public safety while respecting privacy. We have heard from many Ontarians. Myself, I actually heard from a constituent on this exact issue who wants to volunteer and remain engaged in their community but has had some mental health issues. She raised this with me during the 2014 debate time.

People like this constituent of mine have faced unnecessary barriers due to inappropriate non-conviction and non-criminal information, such as mental health records, being disclosed during routine police record checks. Many of these individuals had schooling and careers placed in jeopardy because of this, and, in some cases, lost out on other employment opportunities.

If passed, this legislation would help remove those unnecessary barriers and increase employment and volunteering, like for my constituents in Davenport, and education opportunities. We are also establishing a specific test to ensure all information is provided in vulnerable sector checks to ensure that those who need it most, like our children and our seniors, continue to be protected.

I'm very happy with the discussion that we've had this afternoon in the House, that we are all on the same page with regard to the importance of this important bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim McDonell): The member for Niagara Falls has two minutes.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I want to thank my colleagues from the Conservative Party, the Liberal Party, and my own members. We come here a lot of times, and we're sent here to do the best work we can. Sometimes it works, and I think today is the perfect example of where it works. We are elected to do a job. We see a wrong here. We put a bill together to make sure we can correct

it. I think we should give ourselves a hand, because that's exactly how it should work here.

I want to tell you a story. As most know, I'm from Niagara Falls. Niagara Falls has Niagara-on-the-Lake, Niagara Falls and Fort Erie, but we also have the bridges that go over to the border. Here is a perfect example of what transpires on a non-conviction record. Somebody is going across the border—they don't know. When I read this, it says a "non-conviction record." Well, how did I get a record if I wasn't convicted? That's kind of interesting to me.

So you go across the border. I've got my family. I'm going out maybe either to a Sabres game or a Bills game, or just going to buy dinner, and I get stopped at the border. Now they're asking those types of questions because it comes up, and I get turned back. This is what we've got to fix. The embarrassment is incredible.

I just want to say, once again, thanks very much for all of your comments. And congratulate yourselves for, actually, a pretty pleasant half-hour here, listening to us all talk about the importance of doing something right so that more people can volunteer in our communities, so they can do something right. We all know volunteers are what make our communities happen.

We really have an issue—I have 15 seconds left. I'm going to put a quick 15 seconds out: We need more volunteers. We need more young people at the Lions, at the Legion—it doesn't matter what it is. Get out and volunteer. It's the best thing you can do—it makes you feel good—for your communities. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim McDonell): Further debate.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am very, very happy to be in the House this afternoon to listen to this very constructive, positive conversation. I think I might just keep this Hansard close to me, because it's a special afternoon when all of us are so in tune with one another.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: It's a rare treat.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It is, in fact, a rare treat.

I just want to speak, because I think that my colleagues on all sides of the House have spoken so eloquently about the merits of this and the importance of this; to actually follow from the member from Niagara Falls talking about, really, why we are doing this. We are doing it because we want to encourage volunteers to volunteer. I think everybody in this Legislature has a strong history in volunteerism. I can't imagine any of us would have been elected to this place had we not been active members of our community.

I know I've been involved in many organizations, but the one I had the strongest relationship with was Big Sisters of London, now Big Brothers Big Sisters of London. I was on the board several years ago; in fact, I was president of the board. One thing we really struggled with, as an organization that matches young girls with women, was the whole issue of safety. It's one thing to have a group activity where several people can keep an eye on the safety of the interactions; it's another thing altogether when a woman and a girl go off and do

whatever activities, often at each other's homes. We really needed to work hard to have confidence that the volunteers we were matching with these young girls would keep them out of harm's way, would keep them safe.

So we did institute the practice, which is now pretty well universal, I think, of doing the police checks. It's not something we've always done; it is something that is relatively recent, that we would do police checks. But that gave us a certain comfort that the young girls would be safe with the volunteer Big Sisters. Sometimes, though, those police checks did put in place a barrier to volunteering.

Now we will have consistent police checks across the province based on the evidence, based on the work of the LEARN guidelines, the law enforcement and records managers network—work that's been done, developed by policing, civil liberties activists, mental health stakeholders, community safety, non-profit, business partners. They all got together and said, "What should a police check include and what should a police check not include?"

I'm delighted, and I think all of us agree—it's a unanimous and enthusiastic agreement—that this is the direction to go. So let's get this job done. But, again, to follow from the member from Niagara Falls, this is a really good opportunity to encourage people to volunteer. My very best friends are friends I made through volunteering, many of them actually stemming back to my time with Big Sisters. When people joined as a—

Interjection.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, please excuse me. I just got a note. I ought to have started by saying—I hope you'll show some kindness to me—that I am sharing my time with the member from Barrie and the member from Sudbury. You don't have to listen to me drone on for 20 minutes.

I think encouraging people to volunteer is an important thing that we as leaders in our communities can do. It is absolutely the truth that the more you give, the more you get. The more you volunteer, the more you want to volunteer. So whether it's—whatever organization in your community—visiting at a long-term-care home, whether it's engaging with kids at Big Brothers Big Sisters, the Boys and Girls Club, there are so many opportunities to volunteer and to actually learn more about yourself and learn more about your community. The thing that I always loved about volunteering is you met people who you might not otherwise meet through your work or your neighbourhood. It exposes you to other kinds of people facing other kinds of challenges. We do want to encourage that.

I know that one of the highlights of my year is going to the Volunteer Service Awards that happen across the province where we get to acknowledge those volunteers who cross the stage and accept their pins in recognition of their volunteering. I tell you, every time I go to that event with my colleague members from London and area, it's just inspiring to see how those long-service volunteers have contributed to the community.

1730

I always say, if you don't think volunteering is important, just imagine if we had no volunteers. Imagine that our hospitals were operated without those volunteers who help us as we enter the hospital, who work in the gift shop to help fund things in the hospital that otherwise would not be covered. Imagine if our kids weren't able to go to Scouts or Girl Guides. Imagine if our schools didn't have the volunteers in them to help kids learn, to support the Student Nutrition Program—whatever it is. Ontario would be a far sadder place if we didn't have volunteers really enriching the community and enriching our environment.

This is a good piece of legislation. It's so great to hear members from all sides of the House supportive of it. It is, as I say, a rare treat of unity. Soon, we'll break out in Kumbaya, maybe.

Interjections.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Maybe that's going too far. Okay, no Kumbaya this afternoon.

Interjection.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Yes, we'll save that spirit until question period tomorrow and see if we can carry on this great spirit of love and harmony in the Legislature tomorrow at 10:30 in the morning.

With that, I will hand off to my colleague the member from Barrie.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member for Barrie.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you, Minister Matthews.

As a former teacher, I'd like to tell you how important it is that police record checks be done on all volunteers who come into the schools. Unfortunately, sometimes people who wish to do harm to children gravitate towards them, and you cannot tell by looking at them or talking to them that they are this kind of criminal, so it is very important that we do keep criminal record checks in place.

However, we have heard from our partners, stakeholders, police services, businesses and volunteer organizations that there's a need for consistent practices and policies across this province. For instance, I know a young woman who was applying for part-time employment in two different school boards in the same area. So she applied for a police record check for the one board and got it, and then took it to the other school board and showed it—it was still timely—and was told, "No, no. You have to apply for another police record check." So she had to put out the money and apply to the same police service for another record check. That isn't fair. First of all, the person had a good police record check. There was no reason to have to apply, particularly from the same police service—although it is important, as I said, that we get people in the schools who have gone through the record checks.

The other thing that happened when I was president of the teachers' federation and this procedure first came in place is I had, I would say, a middle-aged teacher call me

almost in tears. He had done something in another province when he was a juvenile, and he was petrified. Here he was, 20 years into his teaching career, and he was worried that he was going to get fired because of that conviction. It had nothing to do with his job as a teacher. We were able to make sure that his record had been expunged. He is one of the very special teachers who works with special-needs children and helps children who are having difficulty in society and perhaps having some issues with discipline. Thank heavens, the good news was that yes, it was expunged, and he got to keep his job.

The other thing was that back then, teachers would call—there were a few of them, and there are probably some people in here, who, in their younger days, had perhaps been driving when they shouldn't have—those kinds of things. Very clearly, that has no bearing on volunteering or working in the school system, and those are the kinds of things that need to be consistent across the province.

If passed, this legislation would help remove those unnecessary barriers and increase employment, volunteers and education opportunities. It does this by prohibiting the release of non-criminal information such as mental health records and strictly limiting the release of non-conviction records. As the member from Niagara said, there are certain times when records such as those need to be divulged—I'm not going to go into any examples—in order to keep children in schools safe.

I urge everyone to support this bill; I think we need it to be consistent. I hope this means there will be consistent prices and that if you have one police record check, you will be able to use it when you're volunteering in several different places.

We are ensuring that individuals will have a chance to review their non-conviction records and seek a reconsideration of the information contained in the check. I think that's only fair, too.

These changes will make Ontario a leader in Canada—with a clear, consistent and comprehensive framework to remove unnecessary barriers to success for individuals, while making sure that our communities are safe.

In the schools, we have parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts—people who come in and read with the children, people who help out with crafts, special activities, going on field trips, all of those kinds of things. We would have a hard time doing all the wonderful things that happen in the schools without those volunteers, so I urge everyone to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Sudbury.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: I'd like to thank my colleague from Barrie and, of course, the President of the Treasury Board for their debates.

If the Chair will give me a little bit of leeway, since we're talking about police record checks and police came up, I think it's important for all of us to put in our thoughts today the family of Constable Joe MacDonald,

who was killed 22 years ago today in Sudbury. His wife and two kids, his mother and father, and his sisters are in our thoughts, I know, in Sudbury, and here at Queen's Park as well.

Applause.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you. We've talked a lot about Constable MacDonald in Sudbury, and one of the great things about Constable MacDonald was that he also gave back to our community as a volunteer. He volunteered with youth; he volunteered in many other aspects. To really acknowledge Constable MacDonald, Sudbury created a youth football league in memory of him: the Joe MacDonald Youth Football League. If you think about that league today, there are so many volunteers who are needed to make it run. I can think of Dr. Mike Staffen, who I played football with way back in the day, who has been instrumental in keeping that organization going. But there are so many volunteers who keep that organization going.

The President of the Treasury Board spoke about it earlier: I know many of us get the opportunity to go to the Volunteer Service Awards. Just this past year, I was able to attend. I believe we had about 200 volunteers from my great riding of Sudbury there to receive an award. As the President of the Treasury Board was talking about, if we just imagined those 200 people not being there, who would be affected? It's the seniors in our community, who actually rely on great organizations like Meals on Wheels, and many other organizations in my riding that I could talk about that relate to volunteer service and provide service to seniors.

Boards: We forget about volunteer boards, Mr. Speaker. There are so many great boards within my community, within I know all of our communities, that do great work. They sit and have to go through Robert's Rules and learn all of those processes, but they stick through it, and they make decisions that truly benefit all of our communities.

1740

For five years prior to being elected in politics, I was involved with the United Way as the executive director and the campaign director. I can truly speak to how, if it wasn't for volunteers, the money that we raised in Sudbury or as any other United Way across this great province or our great country—we wouldn't be able to do that. So today, for us to be able to stand in this House and speak to the importance of this legislation, and make the changes necessary to ensure that we can help all of these charitable organizations, not-for-profit organizations, I think is commendable for all of us. Truly, I've had the experience, as being an executive director or working in a charitable organization, where we've had people come forward and want to volunteer. They really wanted to. But the process for them to get their police record checks in on time to meet a deadline, to meet an opportunity or whatever that charity or organization was doing, would pass because that timeline was so long.

I know we're talking about more and more police record checks coming forward. I believe—just the OPP,

if I've got the statistic here down correctly, does more than 200,000 checks annually. Although there is no accurate data on the total checks province-wide, anecdotal evidence suggests demand for record checks is increasing. So we've got the OPP having to do 200,000. I don't know how many the Greater Sudbury Police Service needs to do, but if we went through every police service across the province, I'm sure those are significant numbers. If we can compile all of this and streamline this to make it easier for those who are being affected by trying to get their police record check, I think we're doing the right thing, not only as a government, but as a Parliament in general.

I know our stakeholders—police, businesses, volunteer organizations—are talking also about consistent practices and policies across the province. This legislation will do just that. Also, prior, I think it's important to recognize that before my days at the United Way, I was also a manager within the residential field in terms of providing services to individuals with developmental handicaps. Once again, lots of people with great big hearts wanting to volunteer, and I was always so honoured and humbled to see so many people wanting to come out and work in some difficult areas.

This legislation still addresses the area in which we need to protect some of our most vulnerable citizens. I know my colleague from Barrie was speaking earlier about the importance of getting police record checks in school systems. There are also many in vulnerable situations who still need to have the kind of police checks that would require specific information for them to ensure that they can do their job effectively, but at the same time, make sure that they fit the criteria of what type of person needs to be working in those sectors.

I'm very happy, again, to be able to say that we're moving forward with this legislation. I was very happy to hear that all parties are in support of this legislation to ensure that we can continue to think about all of those volunteers who come to those service awards, but also think about all of the volunteers who are in our province who actually make our province what it is, both economically and socially. They do a fantastic job, and I think all of us here acknowledge the great work of our volunteers, thank all of our volunteers.

It truly was my honour to be able to speak to this this afternoon. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? Oh, sorry; questions and comments.

Mr. Jim McDonell: How quickly you forget the routine.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'm glad you're here to bail me out.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I acknowledge the notes from the Deputy Premier, the member from Barrie and the member from Sudbury. I think it really talks about the importance of volunteers in our communities. We really couldn't function without them. It is disheartening when you see people apply for different positions, whether it be employment or volunteering, and we beat them up with these police checks.

I would also like to make sure that—generally when people retire, they get involved with two or three or more different organizations. A police check could be used for more than one organization or employment. I have a couple of daughters applying for teaching positions, and every board they apply for requires a separate police check, which can be expensive, especially for someone who's seeking employment—so some time frame where a police check is good for a period of time, maybe a year, so that it can be reused.

As I say, volunteers do so much, and we want to make sure we make it as easy as possible and as cheap as possible, because they're also on the hook for paying for these police checks. It's tough, when you're asking somebody to give freely of their time, their efforts and all the other expenses that go along with volunteering, that we would turn around and actually ask them to contribute to the cost of the police checks—or the charity that would be reimbursed for it.

I think we have all-party support for this bill, so we're looking forward to see it going through, just to make life a little bit easier, and as a thank you to all the hours—literally millions of hours—put into this province by volunteers as they work through the essentials of making our communities work.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I had to rise and give my comments because everybody seems to be getting along today. In the spirit of Thanksgiving, I want to thank this government for bringing this bill forward that we can actually all agree on, and say that it is a good thing that's happening here in the Legislature.

I want to point out, though, because I do have a passion about the bill that I brought forward, Bill 95, the mental health and addictions bill, that that bill has addressed a need in a wide range of communities across Ontario. When I was researching that bill, it came up in discussion that a lot of people who suffer with mental health and addictions issues reach a crisis point, and the only resource they have left is to call 911 and they get the police. Sometimes that isn't always the most appropriate response to what they're going through.

This is the scenario that I'm trying to portray here, Speaker. Someone has a mental health issue; there may not be the timely access to the resources they may need in the community or in the health care system—because of doctor shortages, wait times—and then they're in crisis and they call the police. That's their only thought in an emergency situation.

It's good to see that the police record checks bill is now going to look after some of those mental health issues, because sometimes it's a result of the gaps in our system, where people didn't access that mental health and then they're left at a stage where they reached out to the wrong organization and find themselves perhaps with a police check that, really, was unnecessary. I'm glad to see that that is going to happen, because people get ill, and if that's who they call for help, it shouldn't affect

them for 20 years if they want to become a volunteer in an organization.

So it's good to see that this bill is here. Happy Thanksgiving to all of my colleagues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further comments?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure this afternoon to speak on Bill 113 and to thank many people who were involved: first of all, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, who brought this matter to my attention when I was the Minister of Public Safety. This one item, among others, we brought to the round table on civil liberties, and included at the table were different, very important stakeholders, like the John Howard Society, the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, the police union, the not-for-profit organizations, defence lawyers and the crown.

When they brought this to our attention, there was a bit of resistance, I should say, about entering into that type of work. But, at the same time, we realized that different police forces had different approaches to this, so there was no consistency.

1750

I was so pleased when the minister of public safety and corrections brought this Police Record Checks Reform Act last spring. It is very important. It's important that we support this because when there is no process in Ontario—everybody has a different process—then people depend on the area in which they live, and the outcome of the police record check would be different. This will bring stability and consistency, and I ask everyone to support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to bring a few comments to this. I was supposed to have 20 minutes. I'm not certain I'm going to get that in, so I'm going to try to get through as much as I can in my two minutes.

I'd like to commend the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services for bringing this piece of legislation through. Certainly we support, and I support, the rights of volunteers to be treated fairly. On that note, I'm going to be bringing my PMB tomorrow about election advertising spending. I hope we can have the same collegial, committed support there to be able to talk about it and find the legislation that's going to help everyone.

I support this legislation because it brings consistency and transparency to police record checks, and I support this because as I said in my earlier comments, our volunteers are the heart and soul of our great communities, our great province and our great country. What we want to make sure that we have, however, is a balance of diligence. I have two young men, my sons Zach and Ben, who have participated in a lot of activities, and we want to ensure that those people providing leadership to them are there for the right reasons and have the proper training and background.

What I hear from a lot of people in my riding is how many of them—and many of them are multiple, multiple volunteers. I attend the Volunteer Service Awards on behalf of the province every year. We have 300 to 400 people go through there; one person last year had 72 years of volunteerism. Many of them carry multiple volunteer hats. The concern they are saying is, “I have to go out and get these record checks done over and over.” There’s a lot of cost, there’s a lot of effort, there’s a lot of duplication.

The other thing I don’t want it to do is be prohibitive. Some people may not be able to afford to do this, even though they want to go out and help their communities.

So I commend this legislation. I think there are a lot of good things there, but I think there are certainly a few things we can amend. The non-conviction records is one. I think people unknowingly don’t offer that information, thinking it will stay with them for life even if they’ve never been convicted. I don’t think they want it to stay there. I certainly don’t want it to stay there.

I think we can have some more friendly amendments and make this truly a great piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Somebody over there has two minutes. Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I really, as I say, have enjoyed this afternoon. It has just been wonderful. I want to say thank you to the member for Barrie, the member from Sudbury, the members from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry and from London–Fanshawe, the Attorney General and the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. I think that what we’ve heard this afternoon is very strong support to get this past second reading, into committee and back to the Legislature and passed. It’s a

good bill. It’s an important bill. It will remove barriers to volunteering. It will protect safety.

All in all, Speaker, I think we’ve had a great afternoon. I commend you in the Chair for bringing this kind of harmony to this place, because I think we all need a little bit of that good cheer. This isn’t always the place, but Speaker, you have managed to make this place—as is your wont, I know—a place simply of positive energy.

Mr. Bill Walker: We’re on the porch together.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What’s that?

Mr. Bill Walker: We’re on the porch together.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We are on the porch together. We’re not quite singing Kumbaya, but we’re going to get out the guitar pretty soon and enjoy this time together.

Speaker, we are united that volunteers are, as the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound said, the heart and soul of our communities. We would not have the kind of communities that we have without those extraordinary volunteers, so if we can make something a little bit easier, a little bit better for those volunteers, I think that’s exactly what we want to be doing.

So again, thank you to all of the people who have participated in this debate. I look forward to hearing thoughts from other members.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thanks to the Deputy Premier, and I hope that this companionship continues at 10:30 tomorrow morning. I’ll be waiting to see.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Since it is now five to 6, this House stands adjourned until 9 tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1755.

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permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

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sexuel**

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Taras Natyshak, Peggy Sattler
Laurie Scott, Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Continued from back cover

By-election in Sudbury

Mr. Steve Clark	5676
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	5677

DEFERRED VOTES / VOTES DIFFÉRÉS

Great Lakes Protection Act, 2015, Bill 66, Mr. Murray / Loi de 2015 sur la protection des Grands Lacs, projet de loi 66, M. Murray	
Third reading agreed to	5677
Protecting Condominium Owners Act, 2015, Bill 106, Mr. Orazietti / Loi de 2015 sur la protection des propriétaires de condominiums, projet de loi 106, M. Orazietti	
Second reading agreed to	5678
Visitor	
Mr. Arthur Potts	5678

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Yvan Baker	5679
----------------------	------

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Forest industry	
Mr. Victor Fedeli	5679
Community Living Elgin	
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	5679
Bowmanville Applefest	
Mr. Granville Anderson	5679
Privatization of public assets	
Mrs. Julia Munro	5679
Bear control	
Mr. John Vanthof	5680
Post-secondary education	
Mr. Yvan Baker	5680
Carp Farmers' Market	
Mr. Jack MacLaren	5680
Community policing	
Mrs. Amrit Mangat	5680
Threads of Life	
Ms. Ann Hoggarth	5681

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES / RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills	
Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris	5681
Report adopted	5681

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Pathways to Post-secondary Excellence Act (Post- secondary Educational Report), 2015, Bill 127, Mr. Baker / Loi de 2015 sur les voies de l'excellence au niveau postsecondaire (rapport sur l'enseignement postsecondaire), projet de loi 127, M. Baker	
First reading agreed to	5681
Mr. Yvan Baker	5681
Business Corporations Amendment Act (Meetings of Shareholders and Executive Compensation), 2015, Bill 128, Mr. Takhar / Loi de 2015 modifiant la Loi sur les sociétés par actions (assemblées des actionnaires et rétribution des membres de la direction), projet de loi 128, M. Takhar	
First reading agreed to	5682
Mr. Harinder S. Takhar	5682

MOTIONS

Estimates

Hon. Yasir Naqvi	5682
Motion agreed to	5682

Private members' public business

Hon. Yasir Naqvi	5682
Motion agreed to	5682

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

National Peace Officers' Memorial Run

Hon. Yasir Naqvi	5682
Mr. Patrick Brown	5683
Ms. Jennifer K. French	5684

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Hospital services

Mr. Norm Miller	5685
-----------------------	------

Privatization of public assets

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	5685
-------------------------------	------

Lung health

Mr. Arthur Potts	5685
------------------------	------

Volunteer firefighters

Mr. Robert Bailey	5686
-------------------------	------

Dental care

Mme France Gélinas	5686
--------------------------	------

Soins palliatifs

M. Victor Fedeli	5686
------------------------	------

Tenant protection	
Ms. Catherine Fife	5686
Employment practices	
Mr. Arthur Potts.....	5687
Energy policies	
Mr. Victor Fedeli	5687
Privatization of public assets	
Mr. Wayne Gates.....	5687
Water fluoridation	
Mr. Arthur Potts.....	5687

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Police Record Checks Reform Act, 2015, Bill 113,	
Mr. Naqvi / Loi de 2015 sur la réforme des	
vérifications de dossiers de police, projet de loi 113,	
M. Naqvi	
Hon. Steven Del Duca	5688
Hon. Helena Jaczek	5689
Mr. Yvan Baker	5689
Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti	5691
Mr. Victor Fedeli	5691
Ms. Catherine Fife	5691
Mr. Bas Balkissoon.....	5691
Mr. Jack MacLaren.....	5692
Mr. Yvan Baker	5692
Mr. Robert Bailey.....	5692
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong.....	5695
Hon. Bill Mauro.....	5696
Mr. Norm Miller	5696
Mr. John Vanthof.....	5696
Mr. Robert Bailey.....	5697
Mr. Wayne Gates.....	5697
Mr. Bas Balkissoon.....	5699
Mr. Bill Walker.....	5699
Ms. Catherine Fife	5700
Mrs. Cristina Martins.....	5700
Mr. Wayne Gates.....	5700
Hon. Deborah Matthews	5701
Ms. Ann Hoggarth	5702
Mr. Glenn Thibeault	5702
Mr. Jim McDonell	5703
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong.....	5704
Hon. Madeleine Meilleur.....	5704
Mr. Bill Walker.....	5704
Hon. Deborah Matthews.....	5705
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.....	5705

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Wednesday 7 October 2015 / Mercredi 7 octobre 2015

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Protecting Condominium Owners Act, 2015, Bill 106, Mr. Orazietti / Loi de 2015 sur la protection des propriétaires de condominiums, projet de loi 106, M. Orazietti

Mr. Chris Ballard	5655
Mr. Victor Fedeli.....	5655
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong.....	5656
Mr. Mike Colle.....	5656
Mr. Michael Mantha	5656
Mr. Mike Colle.....	5656
Vote deferred.....	5657

Strengthening and Improving Government Act, 2015, Bill 85, Mme Meilleur / Loi de 2015 sur le renforcement et l'amélioration de la gestion publique, projet de loi 85, Mme Meilleur

Hon. Jeff Leal.....	5658
Mrs. Laura Albanese	5658
Ms. Ann Hoggarth.....	5659
Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde	5660
Mr. Todd Smith.....	5660
Mr. Taras Natyshak.....	5661
Mr. Grant Crack.....	5661
Mr. Jim McDonell.....	5661
Mrs. Laura Albanese	5662
Mr. John Yakabuski	5662
Mr. Jim McDonell.....	5665
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	5665

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod	5665
Mr. John Vanthof.....	5666
Mr. Chris Ballard	5666
Mr. John Yakabuski	5666
Mr. Jagmeet Singh	5666
Mrs. Amrit Mangat	5666
Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn	5666
Hon. James J. Bradley.....	5666
Hon. Glen R. Murray	5666
M. Grant Crack	5666
Mr. Harinder S. Takhar	5666
Mr. Paul Miller.....	5666
Mr. Yvan Baker.....	5666

Wearing of ribbons

Ms. Lisa MacLeod.....	5666
-----------------------	------

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Health care

Mr. Patrick Brown.....	5666
Hon. Eric Hoskins	5666

Privatization of public assets

Mr. Patrick Brown.....	5667
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	5667

Privatization of public assets

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	5669
Hon. Charles Sousa	5669

International trade agreement

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	5669
Hon. Charles Sousa	5670

Winter highway maintenance

Mr. Michael Harris.....	5670
Hon. Steven Del Duca.....	5670

International trade agreement

Mr. Wayne Gates	5671
Hon. Charles Sousa	5671

Northern highway improvement

Mr. Glenn Thibeault.....	5671
Hon. Michael Gravelle	5672

Student safety

Ms. Lisa MacLeod.....	5672
Hon. Liz Sandals	5672

Executive compensation

Ms. Peggy Sattler	5673
Hon. Reza Moridi.....	5673

Condominium legislation

Mr. Han Dong	5674
Hon. David Oraziatti	5674

Water extraction

Mr. Ted Arnott	5674
Hon. Glen R. Murray.....	5674

Pension plans

Mr. Paul Miller.....	5675
Hon. Charles Sousa	5675

Senior citizens

Ms. Harinder Malhi.....	5676
Hon. Mario Sergio.....	5676

Continued on inside back cover



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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 41st Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

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**Official Report
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(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 8 October 2015

Jeudi 8 octobre 2015



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 8 October 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 8 octobre 2015

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE L'EMPLOI ET LES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL

Mr. Flynn moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill 109, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour / *Projet de loi 109, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne l'emploi et les relations de travail.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate today—kick off the debate, actually—for second reading of Bill 109, which is formally titled the Employment and Labour Statute Law Amendment Act, 2015.

Before I get into the details of the bill, I'd like to take the opportunity to let you know that I'll be sharing my time with the member from Eglinton–Lawrence, Mr. Mike Colle, the best parliamentary assistant anyone could have.

I'd also like to take this opportunity on behalf of all in this province to express our sincere gratitude to the firefighters and all front-line health and safety workers who risk their own lives and their own safety to protect the lives of others every day. They believe in the concept of public service; they don't do that work for the glory of the headlines. I don't think that the heroism they demonstrate day in and day out has gone unnoticed or unappreciated by the people in this House. I—and I think all Ontarians, for that matter—cannot thank those men and women enough.

This is one of the reasons we are proposing changes to three pieces of legislation which will, if they become law, provide increased fairness to all workers across Ontario by strengthening protections, enhancing compensation and ensuring that broader public sector transitions can go as smoothly as possible, while still balancing the democratic rights of workers.

Speaker, if passed, this bill would amend the Fire Protection and Prevention Act of 1997; it would also amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act of 1997; and,

finally, the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act of the same year, 1997.

I'd like to talk first, briefly, about the proposed amendments to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. As I said previously, the member from Eglinton–Lawrence will go into further detail on the other two amendments to the other two acts—the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, shortly.

Bill 109 is going to provide much greater safeguards to all workers in the province through making changes to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. Our first proposed amendment to the act being given second reading this morning is driven by our commitment to protect injured workers and their right to file a claim with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board in this province. Workers in this province should know that it is their right to file a WSIB claim, and that their right will be protected.

The amendments that we're debating today would prohibit employers from taking any actions against any worker with the intent of discouraging that worker from filing a claim or influencing a worker to withdraw or abandon a claim for benefits for either work-related injuries or for illnesses. Those claims would be made with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board.

The proposed amendments would also enable the WSIB to prosecute and to impose administrative penalties when employers try to impede or try to suppress those claims. This would strengthen the WSIB's efforts by legislating much stronger deterrence against employers engaged in any activities that would suppress or impede the right that injured workers have, in this province, to report a work-related injury or illness to the WSIB. The proposed amendment would also enable the WSIB to prosecute and impose administrative penalties when employers try to impede or suppress claims.

Speaker, to make sure that our laws are respected and that workers are protected, we are proposing an increase in the maximum corporate penalties for conviction of an offence under the WSIA from \$100,000 to \$500,000. Not reporting a workplace incident or accident is a violation of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. The WSIB has a zero-tolerance policy and strategy that prevents claim suppression in this province. When a person commits an offence under the WSIA, the WSIB may then lay charges and prosecute.

The bill would also mandate, by statute, that the WSIB board of directors appoint what is called a fair practices commissioner, and that would be an organizational ombudsperson for the WSIB. The fair practices commission

is an independent, neutral and confidential resource for injured workers, for employers and for service providers. It should be noted that its services are free of charge. These services could include looking into individual complaints, tracking complaint trends, identifying system-wide issues within the organization and, finally, recommending improvements to the WSIB itself. By legislatively requiring a fair practices commissioner, what we'll be doing is ensuring the commission's stability and longevity over time.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 109 would also enable the WSIB to calculate survivor benefits based on the average earnings of a worker who is engaged in the same profession as the one in which the deceased received his or her injury. The issue, really, addresses how the WSIB calculates survivor benefits for a worker who dies of an occupational disease who had no or perhaps low earnings on the date of the diagnosis because they had retired from work. This situation could arise because of the long latency period before the onset of many work-related diseases, such as cancer.

Currently, in situations where a worker dies of an occupational disease and had no earnings at the time of that diagnosis, the board's operational practice today is to calculate survivor benefits based on the average annual earnings of a worker engaged in the same trade in which the worker's disease was contracted. Speaker, the proposed amendment before you today would allow the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board to continue the practice that is in place and enshrine it in legislation. I think it's a fair amendment and one that is overdue.

The proposed amendments would apply to payments for survivor benefits that are payable as of January 1, 1998, which was the date upon which the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997, actually came into effect. What we are doing with Bill 109 and the amendments to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act is protecting in a much greater way the people of this province who work, and ensuring that they have the ability to avail themselves of the rights they have as workers in this province to obtain coverage under the WSIB without any interference or undue interference from employers.

Speaker, the amendments are based on the principles of fairness, balance and justice, and, if passed, will be important changes to the legislation we already have in the province of Ontario.

0910

Speaker, Ontario is one of the safest places in the world to work. That doesn't mean we can't do better; it does mean that we will do better. From time to time still, Ontario workers are injured on the job or, in the awful instances that we hear of from time to time, they actually lose their life on the job. Often that takes place as a result of a traumatic injury. But it can also be an illness that is contracted and doesn't appear for years; it just goes through a latent period and then the worker becomes aware that something has happened years back and they need coverage for that.

These changes are long overdue. I hope they enjoy the support of all members of the House. We've tried to

introduce them in a way such that I think all Ontarians will understand this is a fair way to do it, it's a balanced way to do it and it's a responsible way to do it. Certainly it has been formulated with much consultation with the WSIB itself, which is an organization that I think over the past few years has done tremendous things in the services it provides for injured workers and is also, I think, enjoying a good reputation with the employers of this province for providing good value, ensuring that workers get the treatment they receive, ensuring that they get it at the right time and ensuring that the unfunded liability that has plagued this organization in years past is reduced, as the Provincial Auditor asked that it be.

Speaker, my parliamentary assistant for the Ministry of Labour, Mike Colle, will now speak to the other elements of the bill, which include further details, as I spoke of earlier, on the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, as well as the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act. I hope that all members of the House will see fit to support this bill when it comes to a vote.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Eglinton-Lawrence.

Mr. Mike Colle: Thank you to the minister for bringing this very comprehensive series of reforms forward for the people of Ontario, especially those who are injured on the job, and for those who have dangerous jobs, like our firefighters and our first responders. I know the minister is very proactive in listening and acting on recommendations brought forward by all the partners in labour in Ontario: the employers, the workers, the unions, all the experts who are out there. This is a culmination of all that ongoing discussion that the minister really takes a lot of time to do.

So this came forward as a result of all these discussions and proposals put forward. Bill 109 amends, as the minister said, the Fire Protection and Prevention Act from 1997, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, and also the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act, which is a complex piece of legislation but is another needed amendment.

I was talking to the executive director of the construction association of Ontario yesterday. He was saying that there's just a time for all of us, whether we're workers, employers or ordinary citizens, to slow down sometimes and ensure that we consider the safety aspect of work. All of us assume that buildings are going to be built, hospitals are going to be built, roads are going to be repaired, critical hydro infrastructure is going to be kept up to speed, and we all want it done yesterday. We're in such a hurry to have this work done, we forget that the workers out there are sometimes in a very precarious situation. We must all put in our culture of work, I think, this big "S" of safety. Certainly workers know it is critical to work in a methodical, safe way, because they are risking their lives.

I think there are 250 cranes in the sky in Toronto. Imagine how dangerous that kind of work is, the responsibility the company has that maintains the equipment, the workers who operate it, the workers and the public in the surrounding area. We just basically think that's auto-

matic. Well, it isn't automatic. It's just like the 1.5 million people who travel on public transit every day in Toronto, and probably another million in the greater Toronto area. The public transit alone—the buses, the trains, the GO system—is very technical, precarious work at times. We've got to ensure that our bus drivers, train operators, mechanics, maintenance workers—everybody—is given the proper support in ensuring safety. Safety, safety, safety: It is not automatic. That's what this bill tries to support: the whole idea that people do get hurt on the job, sad to say, but they need protection.

As the minister said, in some cases the injury is latent. I think of Johns Manville in Scarborough. All those workers worked for decades with asbestos. They didn't know that they were basically contracting cancer, and the cancer didn't appear till decades later. That's what happens in many workplaces. You think the workplace is safe, but there may be an air quality problem, there may be some kind of work procedure that causes an injury that comes after the fact. That's one of the things this act tries to change, to protect workers who receive these injuries after the fact. They could be retired.

I know that firefighters have been bringing that forward for years. They've been saying, "We've attended all these fires. Sometimes they're chemical fires." Then, after a number of years, there is a frightening series of firefighters who have cancer, and they all say, "Well, listen, we didn't know at the time. It could have been the result of those fires we had to deal with 10 years ago." These are some of the protections we're putting in place with Bill 109.

As I mentioned in this reference to firefighters, whom we are further protecting in this legislation, in my own riding of Eglinton—Lawrence just this summer we had our annual Marlee-Ville Festival, on Marlee Avenue. One of the participants at the festival suffered a seizure. We think it was a diabetic seizure. Luckily, the gentleman didn't hit his head on the concrete sidewalk when he collapsed. Right away we called 911, and the first responders there were the firefighters. They came 10 minutes before the ambulance. As a result of that quick response by our firefighters, through heavy traffic—it was about 5 o'clock—that individual was put on the ambulance, which came later, rushed to hospital and saved, I'm sure, a lot of grief going forward.

We also had a massive, potentially dangerous, fire on Castlefield Avenue a year ago, when a foam mattress factory burned down. It was a multi-alarm fire. Firefighters were hundreds of feet up on their ladders trying to put out this fire to ensure that it didn't spread. They did an amazing job. They protected the surrounding properties—the neighbourhood—and no one got hurt. It was a pretty complex, precarious fire incident. This is what is done every day, and these are the everyday dangers our workers face, especially our firefighters and first responders. This bill tries to remedy that with more protections.

0920

As we say, our ongoing efforts to help, especially workers who work in dangerous situations—and it could

be any worker. It could be people who seem to have so-called inside office jobs; they could be in a dangerous situation. People who work in construction, people who work in mines—every day there are hundreds of thousands of Ontarians who need to be protected.

According to the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, there are 11,000 full-time firefighters and 19,000 volunteer firefighters. That's a lot of people who are out there trying to protect us every day. Our legislation here, Bill 109, would provide the Fire Protection and Prevention Act with new substantive procedural and enforcement provisions, so there are going to be new enforcement provisions in this bill. These amendments would bring the Fire Protection and Prevention Act into greater and more natural alignment with the Labour Relations Act.

In other words, a lot of the workplace rules of safety and protection that the firefighters work under—up until this proposed bill, if passed—aren't under the Labour Relations Act. What this bill is doing is taking a lot of those activities that come under the Fire Protection and Prevention Act and folding them into the Labour Relations Act. That's a significant change. Therefore, what we're really doing is putting a lot of the practices that normal workers enjoy under the Labour Relations Act, as also applicable to firefighters. Before, it was separate. That's one of the most significant things that Bill 109 is doing.

By doing that, what we are really doing, hopefully, is reducing the need to go to court to get remedial action. As you know, Mr. Speaker, courts can be very lengthy, very expensive, very complex and very adversarial. But by putting a lot of these activities in the Fire Protection and Prevention Act under the Labour Relations Act, we are going to hopefully reduce the need of appealing to our judicial system, which will save time, money and effort.

The proposed amendments would enhance the Fire Protection and Prevention Act by adding very similar key legislative provisions already available to those covered by the Labour Relations Act. These are some of the key provisions where the Fire Protection and Prevention Act will now be covered by the Labour Relations Act:

- unfair labour practice protections;
- expedited grievance arbitration;
- union security and related provisions;
- religious objections;

—Ontario Labour Relations Board authority to enforce all provisions under part IX of the Fire Protection and Prevention Act;

—the power of an arbitrator to enforce a written settlement of a grievance, and the ability of the parties to file an arbitration decision in the Superior Court of Justice and have it enforced as an order of that court; and

—the power of the Ontario Labour Relations Board to grant interim orders.

All of these existing provisions in the Ontario Labour Relations Act will now also be folded into—or vice versa—the Fire Protection and Prevention Act. These are significant changes.

As we all concur, in this province we all appreciate the incredible efforts of our firefighters in communities all across Ontario. I think these changes will certainly protect them even further in their workplace.

The third element of Bill 109 consists of legislative amendments to the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act, which was passed in 1997. Under these proposed amendments, when an event in the broader public occurs to which the act applies, such as certain amalgamations or restructurings, if a prescribed minimum percentage of employees in the new bargaining units are represented by the same union, that union would be ordered to be the bargaining agent for the new unit without a representation vote.

As happened in Toronto, we had the amalgamation of the six cities and boroughs into one; we had it done in Ottawa; we had it in Hamilton; we had it in the Lindsay area—Kawartha Lakes. When you bring those entities together, the workers and their contracts and their protections and union arrangements all of a sudden are affected by these amalgamations. What this amendment here does is try to accommodate the reality of unions so we don't go through a long process of reconfiguring the associations that are already in existence. It just streamlines that so we don't get these long, drawn-out confrontations when changes are made administratively by amalgamations in this province.

We have been told, as the minister has said, that such a change would help to reduce time and disruption during events such as mergers. Speaker, as you know, our government is committed to advancing safe, fair and respectful workplaces. That's why these amendments have come forward in Bill 109. We're trying to increase the level of fairness by strengthening protections for all of these workers, and we will ensure that the broader public sector transitions go as smoothly as possible, while still balancing the democratic rights of workers.

Strengthening protections for workers while supporting business is part of the government's plan to build a stronger Ontario. As you know, Mr. Speaker, the critical thing is to have this partnership, this combined effort, whether it be an employer, whether it be workers, whether it be their unions, to make this province a province that works for people, provides services for people and protects people. So it's not that the government can do this by itself. The government needs those partners to consult, to collaborate and to make improvements.

It is not a static thing. The Fire Protection and Prevention Act was brought forward in this Legislature in 1997. It is an updating of that as a result of these ongoing consultations and suggestions made by workers, by unions, by employers. We've tried, with this legislation, to strike a balance. It is never possible, and the pages on their last day should know this: You could never please everybody. It's just like your mother can't please all the kids in the family, nor can government ever please everyone. But you try to be fair.

I know that in Hamilton they tried to call themselves the "fair" city of Hamilton. In other words, you can't

give everybody everything they want but you try to give people everything they need to the best of your ability. In this legislation, whether it's in Hamilton, whether it's in Ottawa, whether it's in Peterborough, we try to ensure, whether you're a firefighter, you're a factory worker or you're someone providing a service, big or small, that there are these protections in the workplace safety act that will ensure that you get a fair shake. God forbid, if you are injured on the job, if you develop an illness—in this bill we also try to amend the procedures around survivor's benefits. Those are very complex areas, because if that person, sadly—the partner or the husband or wife—passes away on the job, the survivor's benefits pension is critically important. The way that's handled could affect the life of that survivor, plus the family, so we need to do these things in a way that is compassionate, comprehensive and fair.

That's what's in Bill 109. It is an area of legislation that has responded to the requests by various stakeholders, our firefighters, by municipalities, by employers, to try and update some of these acts that were brought in in 1997. I just hope that the members from all sides will come up with further ideas on how we can strengthen this, how we can take into account all the complexities and make this a good piece of legislation.

I look forward to everyone participating in this debate, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

0930

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to respond to the relatively brief remarks by the Minister of Labour and his parliamentary assistant, the member for Eglinton—Lawrence. I think it's fair to point out that the government actually has 60 minutes for its lead-off speech and they chose to use about 30 minutes, but maybe that gives more time to the opposition, so we appreciate that, I guess, in one sense.

Both Liberal speakers gave an interesting presentation about the bill, but I think there could have been perhaps more information about what the bill actually does. Certainly I appreciate the opportunity to have met with some of the minister's staff earlier this week for a briefing that I requested on the bill that I would have hoped might have been offered, but I had requested it and they responded and we've had a chance to begin the dialogue. Our caucus is very interested in Bill 109 and want to ensure that it's thoroughly debated.

I want to express my appreciation to the minister for his quick message of congratulations when I was appointed our party's labour critic and his willingness to have a more comprehensive briefing, which we're getting together to do this afternoon. So that's forthcoming, and I appreciate that.

But I would have to say that in neither speech did we hear any information about what this bill is going to cost. Surely there has been a comprehensive and detailed financial analysis of what impact these changes will have, particularly on WSIB premiums. As we know, employers

pay the premiums, and that's an ongoing concern of the business community. They want to make sure that they're getting good value for their money and that the system is being administered well and fairly, but they are also interested in premiums. I know that the great work that has been done by the current chair and her management team at the WSIB has resulted in no increase in premiums in the last year or two, and that's a good thing. But I would ask the minister in his response, or his parliamentary assistant, to explain to the House: What is the impact on premiums and/or what is going to be the impact on the unfunded liability of the WSIB as a result of Bill 109?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm glad to have the chance to weigh in a little bit on Bill 109, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour. I look forward to, later in the debate, weighing in a little bit longer than the two minutes, certainly after we've had a chance to hear from our labour critic, who I know is going to have many thoughts to share. And as we heard from the member from Eglinton–Lawrence that he's looking forward to other members offering ideas to make this stronger and the best bill that it can be, I am sure you will be hearing lots and lots from the opposition in terms of ways to strengthen and improve this.

I see the three major sections in this bill, and I'll just take a minute and 10 seconds to address the third section, which is familiar in that, three weeks before Bill 109 hit the table here, I introduced my Bill 98. I appreciated everyone's support for that in that discussion on protecting the victims of occupational disease.

What I see in this bill, while some parts align, is that it's only half of what my bill was intending to do, and I think we agreed that the spirit of that, we all were in support of. I know that I'm looking forward to bringing forth those ideas and making sure that the voices of workers don't get lost in the shuffle.

Bill 109 addresses section 48 of the WSIA, whereas mine was 48 and 43. That section 43, where we're looking at workers and what they are entitled to, I really think warrants full discussion. We need to move forward because, as the Minister of Labour said, these diseases may be contracted, but they don't appear for years. It shouldn't be when it's diagnosed; it should be when the injury actually occurred. So I look forward to having these discussions.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I'm delighted to rise in my place in the Legislature this morning and add my voice to those of the Minister of Labour, the member from Eglinton–Lawrence and the member from Oshawa, of course a significant defender of workers' rights, with a great private member's bill that she has put forward; and of my colleague the member from Wellington–Halton Hills.

This is an important piece of legislation on so many fronts—two minutes won't do it justice—but the modernization of our statute is long overdue. We've had significant input from stakeholders. I want to applaud the Minister of Labour for his work and his response to those calls for modernization.

Why is that important? Because it will provide greater tools and access to resolve disputes. As the member from Eglinton–Lawrence noted, keeping things out of the court is in everybody's interest. It lowers expense and just makes greater sense. That's an important step forward.

Ensuring that our broader public sector transitions go smoothly, and as smoothly as possible, to create that kind of efficiency and stability that we all want and need is really important. Of course, the bottom line is that providing a fair, just and efficient workers' compensation system is something we all want.

I want to just take a minute and talk about the strengthening as regards the Fire Protection and Prevention Act. You know, Speaker, we all enjoy and actually really are blessed by the hard-working firefighters that we have in this province. Burlington is no exception. We have a tremendous group of men and women who put their lives on the line for us every single day. Since safety is our most effective insurance policy, giving them the tools to be more effective and more efficient in the daily execution of their work, where they put their lives on the line every day, is incredibly important.

I look forward to greater debate on this very important piece of legislation, because we all want a modernized set of statutes when it comes to our workforce, today and into the future. Again, I want to applaud the Minister of Labour for this important step forward and, again, give a shout-out to our men and women in uniform who save us every day from fires and the dangers that lurk just around the corner. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to have a couple of minutes to make some preliminary comments on the basis of the debate so far. I don't think there is anyone who disputes the importance of creating safe working conditions for employed people.

Certainly we've seen some egregious, illegal activities. The Ministry of Labour is under constant pressure to make sure that safety protocols are maintained in this province. When you look at other jurisdictions, where there are none or there are very few, people are at tremendous risk, so it's really very important that we maintain those safe working conditions and that they move along with the different types of pressures, machinery, sites and things like that—chemicals, whatever—that increasingly become part of those safe working conditions.

Like my colleague from Wellington–Halton Hills, I would assume that there has been some costing done of the details of implementation. Certainly the business community has to be looking at the balance between their ability to maintain and keep up with the changes and the cost pressures that those might include. So I think it's

really important for the debate in the House to reflect the knowledge of a cost-benefit analysis that would allow for the business community to embrace this initiative.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): To the minister for a two-minute response.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd like to thank the member for Wellington-Halton Hills; the member for York-Simcoe, who just spoke; the member for Oshawa, who has been involved in this bill earlier; and my colleague the member for Burlington for their comments—and my parliamentary assistant, the member for Eglinton-Lawrence, for the comments he added to mine.

A couple of members across the floor noted that I only took nine minutes in my opening remarks. Those of us who have sat on a council, those of us who have been a mayor or a councillor still to this day often look to this place and think that perhaps people talk a little too much here and don't get a lot done. Certainly you could tell the people that have served on a council, because they've learned that it doesn't matter what their political outlook, philosophy or affiliation is; they have learned how to use words, I think, in a much better way than we often do here, and they accomplish a lot more and talk a lot less. There is a little bit of that in there, and certainly that applies, I think, to all members here.

0940

People have asked about the costing. I think if you look to the WSIB and its practices in the past short period of time, the way they've conducted their affairs, compared to how they were conducted in the past, you've seen a tremendous improvement in the management of the WSIB, and not to the detriment of the coverage that's provided. The unfunded liability of the WSIB continues to fall. We're way ahead of schedule. We're doing, I think, a tremendous job. That, we intend to continue. There's nothing in these bills that would impede that in any way.

Certainly, for the working men and women, for those people on the front lines who protect us, there's something in this bill for everybody. It makes life a little easier for those who have been injured at work, it emphasizes the seriousness of committing an offence under these acts, and it also helps organized labour in the sense that they are able to conduct their affairs in a much more efficient manner.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I appreciate the opportunity to speak on behalf of our caucus and do the lead-off speech, as the official opposition critic for labour, in response to the government's Bill 109, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour, which stands in the name of the Minister of Labour, introduced for first reading on May 28, 2015, and now called for second reading this morning. I certainly appreciate this opportunity.

As important as this bill is, and I believe it is a vitally important bill, I think the number one question at Queen's Park today is who is going to be in the House at

3:37 p.m. this afternoon, when the first pitch is thrown down at the Rogers Centre, and who has baseball tickets. I have to say that I don't have baseball tickets. I've received no invitations, alas. So I will be here participating this afternoon. Certainly, I wish the Blue Jays luck as they enter the playoffs. I think it's going to be a very exciting month of October for the people of Toronto, all of Ontario, and indeed all of Canada. I know, Mr. Speaker, that really doesn't pertain directly to Bill 109, but maybe there's some connection there, nonetheless.

I think that it's important to talk about the fiscal context upon which all legislation is presented in this House because, obviously, the strength of the economy is very important to the well-being of the province and the people of the province. Certainly, the budgetary policy of the provincial government is one of the key components of economic leadership, so, again, I feel compelled to point out the fiscal context upon which Bill 109 is introduced.

We know the government projects a deficit this year of \$8.5 billion. That is, in fact, down marginally from last year, at \$10.9 billion, so there has been some improvement in the deficit year over year. But, again, this is a projected deficit for the fiscal year that we're in now, 2015-16. The fiscal year, of course, that we're in now will end at the end of March of next year.

It's also important to point out that the projected provincial net debt is almost \$300 billion in the province of Ontario today. It's projected in the budget to go up to \$298.9 billion. That is up dramatically from last year, year over year: \$14.7 billion higher than it was last year. Last year, the net debt was expected to be \$284.2 billion. So it's a substantial—dramatic, in fact—increase in the debt, year over year.

Provincial government spending this year is expected to be \$131.9 billion. That's up, again, year over year, up \$2.4 billion. The government would lead us to believe that they're holding the line on spending, but in fact spending is actually increasing by \$2.4 billion. Last year, the spending came in at \$129.5 billion.

Another very important number is the net debt per capita. That is, in effect, the amount that each man, woman and child owes because of years and years of government overspending. The net debt per capita is \$21,642. That's up \$870 from last year. Last year, the number was \$20,772. That gives people a better understanding and illustration of what we owe as individuals, if you break it down. That's just provincial debt, Mr. Speaker; that doesn't include the national debt.

Another important number is the debt-to-GDP ratio. Of course, that is a comparison of the provincial debt in relation to the size of our economy and the value of the goods and services that we produce. That is, of course, our gross domestic product. That ratio is 39.8%, up from 39.4% last year. Just to, again, put this number in some sort of context, before the recession in 2007-08, the debt to GDP ratio was 26.2%. Now, it's almost 40%. This is a very worrisome trend that I think the government needs to acknowledge, and acknowledge that they're going to

take greater steps to reduce that ratio back to a more acceptable level.

What does that mean? It means that interest payments on the debt are rising. This year we're spending \$11.4 billion on interest, up from last year. Last year, we spent \$10.7 billion—

Mr. Mike Colle: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order. The member for Eglinton—Lawrence.

Mr. Mike Colle: We have a very important labour bill before us, Bill 109. I haven't heard one reference to this very important labour bill. He's talking about the federal election campaign of Stephen Harper. Let's talk about labour.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you very much for that point of order. I'm hoping the member will tie it in quickly to the bill, and I'd ask him to do so.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I made absolutely no reference to the federal election campaign, Mr. Speaker, but apparently the member heard something else.

The fact is, the interest payments on the debt, \$11.4 billion—and maybe some of the government members are annoyed to hear this, but these are the numbers from their budget. I'm not exaggerating. As a matter of fact, they're the government's own numbers. The interest on the debt is the fastest-growing line item in the budget: 5.7% average annual growth out to 2017-18. So we see a financial picture that is very worrisome, and a budgetary policy that creates severe concern, certainly on the opposition benches and I think across the province.

Certainly, workers and employers and employees, all of whom have an interest in labour law, are all concerned about this, too, Mr. Speaker, once they know the facts. We see a government that continues to engage in spending patterns that are unsustainable and unaffordable. So, yes, that is the fiscal context upon which all of the legislation that's going to be debated today will be debated, including Bill 109.

We see, with Bill 109, that the government is proposing to amend three specific statutes: the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997; the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act, 1997; and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997. There are three schedules in this bill, and they are intended to amend three acts. The bill looks like it's 14 pages, and it is complex and detailed. Again, I think we need more clarification from the government as to what they're proposing to do.

For our part, as the official opposition, I would say that we support fair labour laws in the province of Ontario. We believe there needs to be a balance which respects the rights of workers and the needs of employers. We need to grow the economy and create new, good-paying jobs, and we need to strengthen Ontario's competitiveness so that we can win in the global economy. We see, of course, with the trade negotiations that just concluded in recent days, the Trans-Pacific Partnership, that the government has participated in negotiating—the federal government, and the provinces have

received some information about the details, I hope. I would hope that they will be consulted. The provincial government hopefully will have more details. Hopefully, as the details come out, we'll have a better understanding of what has been discussed.

I think, clearly, we have to be part of that trade negotiation, Mr. Speaker. This negotiation, which has taken place over several years, I believe, will have a significant impact on the world economy. Canada just simply couldn't be left on the sidelines. I hope the deal is in the best interests of Ontario, in the best interests of workers, in the best interests of business and our farm community. I look forward to seeing the details, as well. But certainly we need to see more in terms of what has been decided.

In terms of Bill 109, there's an important component that affects the fire service in the province of Ontario. I would echo the remarks that were made by the minister in terms of his appreciation for the work that is done by our professional firefighters as well as our small-town—what we have always called the volunteer fire service. Of course, Mr. Speaker, in some cases, small communities are paying either an honorarium or an hourly wage to their part-time firefighters, as we call them. We certainly owe a huge debt of gratitude to our fire service, everyone that's involved, and their families, too, because we know it can be a very dangerous occupation.

0950

Firefighters demonstrate enormous courage. They are highly trained, skilled individuals and professionals. Their courage is on display every day and they are prepared to risk their lives to keep us safe. Obviously, from our perspective as the official opposition, we support our fire service and all the individuals who are involved with them. We value what they do. We appreciate it very, very much.

It's my understanding, from what I've heard and what I've been told, that the changes to the Fire Protection and Prevention Act have been developed in consultation with some of our fire service, in particular, the Ontario Professional Firefighters Association. I would have to say that those recommendations in Bill 109 seem to be reasonable as they affect the fire service, from what I've seen so far. But I would also need to point out that the changes to the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act require additional public discussion. Our PC caucus has many questions, and we will be asking questions over the course of this debate. We would hope the government will respond. That's really what debate is supposed to be all about around here. If we raise issues of concern, you would anticipate and hope that the government will address those questions during the course of the debate.

But I also believe and anticipate that this bill will be going to a standing committee of the Legislature for public hearings. I think that would, obviously, be a necessity, allowing the groups and individuals who have ideas, concerns and suggestions to improve the bill, or if they have serious opposition to some of the provisions, that they be given an opportunity to do that.

Of course, in the two-minute responses that we just had to the minister's speech and his parliamentary assistant's, my colleague from York-Simcoe and I both asked a similar question, which was, "What is this bill going to cost? What is this going to cost for the employers?" Because, of course, we know the employers pay the premiums for WSIB. Employers have an interest in that, and the employer groups, from time to time, express concerns about increasing premiums because it becomes a payroll cost. I wouldn't say it's a tax because the premiums are not a tax, but they are a cost to having employees.

It's a payroll cost that is not reflective of your profitability. What you have to pay is based to some degree on your safety record as an employer. But also there are, obviously, minimums that have to be respected. The reality is, employers have to be able to meet their payroll costs as the first order of business, I guess. Even if they are unprofitable and not making money, they still have to make those payments. These are very important concerns.

As we know, over the years, the WSIB has had an issue with respect to its unfunded liability, meaning, there are more commitments, financial commitments and promises that have been made than there is a plan for money to come in the door to pay for them. I know, again, the current WSIB chair, Elizabeth Witmer, our former deputy leader and former colleague here in the Legislature, has done an outstanding job of addressing many of these concerns, working with employers and employees to address the concerns with respect to unfunded liability. Obviously, the injured workers have an interest in the unfunded liability as well, because if there isn't enough money to pay for the pensions or for their benefits, then where is the money going to come from? They obviously share that concern and should.

I would also say that the WSIB has made significant improvement in its unfunded liability, and it's going in the right direction. I believe they have a long-term plan to reduce it—to eliminate it. I don't have the details in front of me—the actual numbers—but from what I've read and heard, they are making good progress, and they deserve acknowledgment for that.

That comes back to the basic question that we asked during the questions and comments: What is this going to cost? These changes to WSIB: What are those going to cost in terms of premiums or in terms of upward pressure on the unfunded liability? Again, valid questions—I think they're valid. I would anticipate and expect that there has been a comprehensive financial analysis done. The government has yet to table it. We would ask them to do so. It has to come out at some point. I would hope that, during the course of debate, subsequent government speakers will address that question. If they don't, we're going to keep asking.

Bill 109: schedule 1, the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997, amendments. Bill 109 incorporates significant portions of the Labour Relations Act into the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, including unfair labour

practices, membership in associations and expedited rights to arbitration. The bill will permit associations to require the inclusion of closed-shop language in a collective agreement, with features such as mandatory association dues, deductions and provisions requiring membership in the association, or giving preference of employment to members of an association.

We understand that these powers are to be balanced by rights for the firefighters as well. For example, expelled or suspended members or those who have been denied membership in an association will be protected on certain grounds, such as in the case of reasonable dissent. This is a key issue for many small-town fire services, Mr. Speaker, because we have been informed that in some cases, this will allow double-hatters to continue their volunteer work without fear of reprisal.

Bill 109 will also allow labour disputes, under this act, to be heard by the Ontario Labour Relations Board as opposed to an Ontario court. Of course, if the disputes don't have to go to court, that frees up some of the court resources for other cases. Hopefully, it can be dealt with by more specifically trained labour relations hearings officers, who are more expert in labour relations law—and deal with these disputes in a more expeditious way, too, I would hope.

Under Bill 109, firefighters will be able to opt out of union membership or even paying union dues if being a member conflicts with their religious beliefs. I am told the changes found in schedule 1 in some cases will apply retroactively.

What we have been told is that this particular schedule incorporates the spirit, I guess, of the Labour Relations Act into the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997. So some of the provisions of the Labour Relations Act and the spirit of it are reflected in the firefighters' legislation.

In 2002, a fire chief in my riding came into my constituency office to inform me about a concern that he had. It was with respect to something that he called double-hatters. Double-hatters are full-time professional firefighters who work for a full-time department, typically in the city, but who may live in a small town nearby. On their days off, they want to volunteer their skills and services to their small-town fire service in their home community. In some cases back in March 2002, we were told that the Ontario professional firefighters' union was telling its members that they had to quit as volunteers or part-time firefighters in their home communities, and if they didn't, they might be kicked out of their association or union; and if they were kicked out of their union, the collective agreement would place in jeopardy their full-time positions.

I took this issue up, researched it thoroughly and brought a bill into the Legislature, Bill 30, to protect the right of small-town double-hatter firefighters to continue to serve in their home communities as well as in their full-time professional job in the city that they might commute to. This became a very controversial private member's bill.

In the end, we had extensive debate. I asked the legislative library to look into it. They told me that there were

more hours of debate on this Bill 30 than any other private member's bill in the history of the province of Ontario; they went back as far as 1950 and then they stopped looking. So I think it's fair to say that this bill received more hours of debate than any other private member's bill in the history of the province.

Again, this was 13 years ago, but I remember it well. Our party was in government. In the end, I insisted on a third reading vote, and the government of the day allowed that to take place. The bill was defeated at third reading, but I was encouraged by the support of two thirds of our caucus at that time who were present in the House and voted for it—but one third voted against it. On the opposition side, of course, the New Democrats voted against it. The Liberals, in opposition at that time, most of them voted against it, but they were whipped. I know that for a fact: They were whipped to vote against it. I believe three of their members decided to support it, one of whom is here today, and I appreciate that very much, the support that he gave the bill at that time.

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I have always said I would continue to stand up for the rights of double-hatters to continue to serve their home communities as firefighters, and I have always done that. We've raised this in the House from time to time when we know there's an issue, but the fact is, it's my understanding that this Bill 109 is an attempt to provide a legislated solution to protect two-hatters, in some cases. I would have to say I express appreciation to the government for bringing this forward. If this is indeed the solution that we were seeking in 2002, we've waited 13 years to get it and obviously I very much appreciate it.

There were extensive public hearings on Bill 30, as well. Again, this goes back 13 years. I do want to make reference to comments at the hearings by the fire marshal of Ontario. Because, of course, my Bill 30 was supported by the firefighters of Ontario, which are the volunteer firefighters in the province—essentially the small-town and rural firefighters. We heard from the parliamentary assistant, the member for Eglinton—Lawrence, that there are approximately—I think he said 19,000 part-time or volunteer firefighters in the province of Ontario and I think he said 11,000 professional or full-time firefighters.

The fact is, my bill was supported by the Fire Fighters' Association of Ontario, which is the volunteer fire service; the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, or AMO, which was expressing support for my bill; and the fire chiefs association of Ontario, representing all the fire chiefs across the province, including the big-city ones. Those stakeholders were supportive of the bill.

I think it's also important to point out, though, that the fire marshal of Ontario at the time, Bernard Moyle, who was the senior fire official in the province working within the Ministry of the Solicitor General at the time, came to committee, expressed support for my bill and suggested that it was needed.

Here is what he said at committee. This was the justice committee on 21 October, 2002. He said:

"In most full-time and composite fire departments, career firefighters are represented by local associations that are affiliated with both the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association and the International Association of Fire Fighters. The constitutions of both of these organizations prohibit career firefighters serving as volunteer firefighters. As a result, the OPFFA has periodically directed that members stop two-hatting or be charged under their constitution, which could result in being expelled from the association.

"Expelling two-hatters is problematic because many fire service collective agreements in Ontario require their members to maintain membership in the firefighters' associations as a condition of full-time employment. This common stipulation means that a full-time firefighter found guilty of a breach of the association's constitution and bylaws could have their membership revoked and consequently be ineligible to continue their full-time employment. Understandably, career firefighters who are serving as volunteer or part-time firefighters would be under considerable pressure to resign if their full-time career was put at risk.

"The conflict between the practice of two-hatting and the association's constitutional provisions is producing tension and instability in Ontario's fire protection delivery system. My office was officially notified of a potentially serious situation involving two-hatters by the chief of the Hamilton fire department on February 8, 2002. In addition to the letter from the city of Hamilton, a number of other letters and inquiries on this subject were received indicating that some career firefighters were receiving letters from their association requesting proof of resignation from their part-time employment within 30 days.

"Information received by my office indicated that the scope of the IAFF"—again, that's the International Association of Fire Fighters—"activity was not limited to Ontario but was also occurring in some areas of the United States. As a result, I established an internal working group to examine the issue of two-hatting and to determine whether there was a public safety concern arising from the OPFFA's increased activity to enforce its constitutional provisions against its members who were two-hatting.

"Under the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, the fire marshal has discretionary power to review and monitor municipal fire protection services to determine if they meet the mandatory requirements of the FPPA and if a serious threat to public safety exists. This was the authority we used to constitute the working group to review the two-hatter issue. Because of the scope and nature of this issue, my office proceeded under the potential serious threat section of the FPPA to review the impact of the OPFFA initiatives to enforce their constitution.

"The" Ontario fire marshal's "concern was that these actions had the potential to result in a sudden withdrawal of the services of two-hatters throughout the province. The right-to-work issue is not part of the mandate of the OFM and was not addressed in our analysis of the

situation. In fact public safety was, and continues to be, the OFM's single focus in this matter.

"I would like to now review the steps taken by my office in attempting to reach a non-legislated solution."

The fire marshal went on, "A brief meeting was held with representatives of the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs and the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association in mid-February 2002"—again, this meeting took place about a month before I was informed of the issue—"to informally discuss the issue. At that time, the OFM committed to working with affected stakeholder groups to determine if there was any common ground that could be used to arrive at a sustainable solution to the problem. The OPFFA and the OAFC"—that's the chiefs' association—"agreed to work with the OFM"—the fire marshal—"and other stakeholders. Moreover, the OPFFA agreed not to aggressively pursue charging their members until such time as the matter had been reviewed and discussed with the stakeholders. They also committed not to take any action that would jeopardize public safety.

"A draft discussion paper was prepared by the OFM working group and distributed to the stakeholders for review and comment. The paper concluded that there was no immediate threat to public safety at this time, but a sudden or widespread withdrawal of two-hatter services would have varying degrees of repercussions to municipalities, up to and including a potential serious threat.

"Formal individual discussions were then initiated to obtain the positions of the following stakeholders: the Fire Fighters Association of Ontario"—that is the volunteer fire service association—"the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association; the International Association of Fire Fighters; the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs; and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. The first meeting was held with representatives of the OPFFA and the IAFF on May 14, 2002.

"On May 22, 2002," the fire marshal went on, "MPP Ted Arnott introduced a private member's bill, Bill 30. We now had the consultation process as well as a proposed legislated solution on the table.

"The consultation process continued, and the first joint stakeholder meeting was held on August 1, 2002, to determine whether a non-legislated solution could be found. Several ideas were discussed and proposals put forth, one by the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs which involved grandfathering existing two-hatters, and another by the OPFFA which involved the phasing out of two-hatters in a manner that would not jeopardize public safety. At the request of AMO, the parties were requested to provide more detail on their proposals.

"The proposals were sent to all the stakeholders for review and comment. In response to these proposals, both the FFAO and AMO advised my office that they could not support the proposals and were supporting a legislated solution.

"During the discussions, it was apparent that no mechanism existed to allow any of the parties to bind their membership to any agreement that may have been arrived at by the parties. For example, AMO could not

bind municipalities"—it didn't have the power to bind municipalities—"to an agreement reached with the OPFFA, nor could the OPFFA guarantee that their locals or individual members would adhere to an agreement. Certainly, all were in a position to influence their membership." But they couldn't compel them to agree.

"Moreover, the parties appeared to be polarized in their positions related to phasing out two-hatters. For example, the FFAO, AMO and the OAFC do not support the phasing out of career firefighters who serve as volunteer part-time firefighters, which is the position of the OPFFA. There simply was no common ground for agreement on a non-legislated solution.

"For the reasons stated above, it is our opinion that an enforceable and sustainable non-legislated solution to the two-hatter issue is not achievable.

"In a letter distributed to members of the OPFFA on October 1, 2002, by Mr. Fred LeBlanc, president of the association, the moratorium on secondary employment charges was lifted, which could significantly increase the activity by the OPFFA membership and potentially impact on public safety.

"It is my understanding that the OPFFA committed to the moratorium as long as constructive dialogue was taking place. This is no longer the case," the fire marshal said at the committee, "so the moratorium was lifted. This is not intended as a criticism of the OPFFA, as they have a legal right to enforce their constitution. However, the lifting of the moratorium by the OPFFA will likely exacerbate the existing tension and uncertainty in both the fire service and municipal communities, and it is unclear to what extent and degree this action will impact on existing two-hatters.

1010

"The sudden or phased withdrawal of two-hatters from communities dependent on volunteer fire departments could significantly impact on their ability to provide an adequate level of fire protection and may in some cases pose a potential serious threat to public safety for the following reasons.

"There would be a loss of experience, leadership and expertise in some communities. In fact, for that very reason, even a single two-hatter can make a significant difference in a small rural community. For example, some two-hatters serve as senior officers and captains and have fire prevention and training responsibilities, which are key functions in any fire department.

"There may be a reduced capacity for providing adequate emergency responses during weekdays, when two-hatters are more readily available due to their shift schedules.

"Increased response times may occur, at least until replacements can be recruited and adequately trained, if in fact replacements are available within the community. There may be an increased time in which to assemble an adequate fire attack team and a potential short-term reduction in fire ground effectiveness, resulting in greater fire losses.

"The time required to recruit and train full-time, part-time or volunteer firefighters can be expensive, creating short-term delivery difficulties. In some communities there may not be a pool of potential candidates available to become volunteer firefighters and a community may not be able to afford hiring full-time firefighters, creating a potential public safety issue.

"In a number of communities that have a heavy reliance on two-hatters, the sudden withdrawal of their services could create a potential serious threat to public safety.

"In conclusion," he said, "there is a provincial and public interest in protecting two-hatters who wish to serve as volunteer firefighters. We do not believe that a non-legislated solution is achievable or enforceable. As a result, without a legislated solution, the existing tensions and uncertainty in the fire service community will continue, and the high potential for two-hatters to resign as a result of OPEFA constitutional enforcement activities could well result in significant public safety concerns arising. It is my understanding that such protection is not uncommon in most jurisdictions in Canada and in the United States.

"In closing, my office recognizes the importance of balancing interests where possible, but supports first and foremost the need to develop a legislated solution that clearly protects the interests of public safety. It is important that career firefighters who wish to serve as part-time or volunteer firefighters in their home communities are permitted to do so without fear of loss of employment."

Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me to read those comments from the standing committee on justice by the fire marshal of Ontario of the day, Bernard Moyle, explaining why he supported my Bill 30.

I realize we're getting very close to the time. Maybe this is a good time to let you pause now and recess the House so that we can resume this debate later on. I still have about half of my time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): You have two minutes.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'll keep going, then. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The whole point of all of that was to again remind the House of the importance of two-hatters in rural Ontario. I could have reiterated many of the points that I made in my second reading speech on Bill 30 in 2002, or my third reading speech on Bill 30 that I presented to this House, which took place, I believe, in December 2002. But I thought it was probably most helpful to take the words of the foremost expert in the fire service in the province of Ontario—the senior fire official in the province of Ontario of the day, the fire marshal—and allow his words to be brought into this debate today to indicate why we do need to support our two-hatter firefighters and ensure that they can continue.

Over the course of this debate there will be more questions, but again, if indeed this Bill 109 provides protection for two-hatter firefighters, that's a good thing for public safety in small-town Ontario, Mr. Speaker, and

I would have to commend the government. It has been 13 years since I introduced my bill, and it's pretty exciting if indeed the day has finally come when we are going to provide the legislative protection that the fire marshal argued was necessary in 2002 and that was encompassed in my Bill 30. If that day is finally here, then it's a good day for public safety in rural Ontario.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands recessed until 10:30 a.m.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise and welcome the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus to Queen's Park. I want to thank them for their breakfast and the conversation this morning, and again welcome them here and thank them for being here at Queen's Park today.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'm really happy to introduce Adam Jeronimo, who is here from my constituency office in Pickering-Scarborough East. This is his first time to Queen's Park and first time to question period. He's attending some meetings and we're going to have lunch today. Welcome, Adam. Thanks for being here.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'd like to congratulate this morning page, Sydney Groskleg, who is joined by her parents today, Jennifer and Darwin. They're here in the gallery this morning. Sydney is the third member of the Groskleg family to act as a page, following her sisters, Giselle and Abigail.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: On behalf of the member for Willowdale, I want to welcome Vibhas Bapat and Swati Bapat, who are the parents of our page captain, Sameer Bapat. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'd like to welcome three local wardens who were here for breakfast this morning with the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus: Rick Phillips, who is the warden of Hastings county and the reeve of Tyendinaga township; Gord Schermerhorn, who is the mayor of Napanee and the warden of Lennox and Addington county; and Robert Quaiff, who is the mayor and warden of Prince Edward county. We welcome them to Queen's Park today.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I think they're on their way here. I'd like to introduce members of the Toronto Blue Jays baseball team: president Paul Beeston, general manager Alex Anthopoulos, and the entire team is scheduled to be here today. I'd like to introduce them and also congratulate them on winning the American east championship and entering the playoffs, and wishing them the best to win the World Series. I'm told they wear hats like that. I'm told that.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Far be it from me to tell the dean of the House it's not a point of order.

Further introductions?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Please join me in welcoming page Grace Maili Sengfah's mother, Ja Kai Shwe, who is in the public gallery today. She is the mother of page Grace Maili Sengfah.

Mr. Chris Ballard: I'm pleased to introduce Frank Leone, Jan Freedman, Jim Abram and Louise Miller from the Aurora Seniors Association. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'd like to welcome all the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus here at Queen's Park today.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: It's my pleasure to introduce—it's his last day here—page Krishaj Rajbhandari. His mother is here, Jasmine Rajbhandari, and his sister is here, Isha Rajbhandari, and a family friend, Norma. They're all sitting up in the public gallery this morning.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I would like to welcome to Queen's Park today Warden Denis Doyle and Kelly Pender from my riding of Kingston and the Islands.

WEARING OF TORONTO BLUE JAYS PARAPHERNALIA

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Kitchener–Conestoga, I believe on a point of order.

Mr. Michael Harris: Yes, a point of order, Speaker, of course: I believe we do have unanimous consent by all parties to allow members today to wear their Blue Jays jersey or hat in the House in recognition of the Blue Jays making the post-season for the first time in 22 years.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before I introduce that unanimous consent, I would ask for an amendment that says, "Don't let Jim Bradley wear a hat."

Laughter.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm sorry. Forget that amendment.

The member from Kitchener–Conestoga is seeking unanimous consent to wear the Blue Jays paraphernalia. Do we agree? Thank you. Put it on.

I would also point out that we have a few Blue Jays fans up there already.

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. The government's 2014 budget made a spending commitment for infrastructure of \$130 billion. In that budget, the spending commitment was fully costed with no mention of the Hydro One fire sale. The 2015 budget made the same spending commitment of \$130 billion, but included the proceeds from the Hydro One fire sale.

What happened? How does this Premier justify the fire sale of Hydro One, saying it's for infrastructure when

there's not one iota of a difference between what they were spending in 2014 and what they're spending now?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, go, Blue Jays.

Let me begin by saying to the Leader of the Opposition that we've always been clear that we needed to look at our assets, to leverage current assets in order to be able to invest in the assets that we need for now and for the future. If we don't invest in the roads and the bridges and the transit systems and the water systems and the schools and the hospitals around this province that we know are needed by communities, we're not going to be able to compete. We're not going to be as productive as we should be, and communities are not going to be able to thrive and businesses are not going to be able to expand.

Infrastructure is fundamental to our economic growth. It always has been. It has been neglected in the past. We are making the investments necessary in order to be able to go forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again for the Premier: No one believes the spin that the Hydro One fire sale is going for infrastructure. In 2014, the Premier said that she would spend \$130 billion in her budget, and they laid out how they were going to pay for it. Now the Liberals claim the \$4 billion from the Hydro One fire sale is going to pay for infrastructure.

An editorial in the Ottawa Citizen reads, "A reasonable person might wonder why we need to sell most of a significant public asset ... just to keep doing what we have been doing" before.

"The real answer, I suspect, is that" it "will enable the government to quietly shift existing money to help it reduce the deficit or pay" for their spending programs.

Mr. Speaker, when will the Premier admit the fire sale of Hydro One is just and entirely to pay for their own mismanagement?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: You know, the assumption, in fact, explicitly stated in that question is that we are doing exactly what has been done by previous governments. That's not true. Previous governments didn't invest in infrastructure, and when we came into office in 2003, what the previous—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm not getting things quiet for somebody to throw their jabs in.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: When we came into office in 2003, the fact is that there was a lag, there was neglect in the investment in infrastructure that had been a hallmark of the previous government, including filling in the hole along Eglinton Avenue where there would have been a subway. We would have had a subway along Eglinton by now if that government hadn't filled—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings will come to order.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again for the Premier: The \$130-billion commitment in 2015 wasn't new. It was fully costed in 2014. The only difference between the 2014 infrastructure commitment and the one in 2015 is the surprise fire sale of Hydro One. The Liberal budget is simply a shell game. Everyone in Ontario knows it's a shell game.

1040

Hon. Deborah Matthews: That is just not true.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): President of the Treasury Board, come to order.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is: What is the money really going for? Is it going for eHealth? Is it going to make up for Ornge? Is it going for the gas plants? Are you doing this fire sale to pay for your own scandals and incompetence?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Every time the Leader of the Opposition says the words “fire sale,” I think he's talking about the 407, because that's what that was.

We were always clear that in order to make the investments that we need to make, we had to look at current assets, Mr. Speaker, and that's why we asked Ed Clark to look at our current assets and to give us advice on how to leverage them to invest in new infrastructure. That was always part of our plan. We were very clear about it and that is what we're doing.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nipissing and the member from Renfrew, come to order.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, we have talked about the assets and the need to leverage assets from the time we put our plan in place. It was in our budget; it was in our election platform. We're moving forward so we can make the investments that are needed in this province.

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. This week the minister stood in the House and spoke of the importance of agriculture in the province, and I commend the minister for recognizing that during Ontario Agriculture Week. But in his capacity, the minister should be fighting for rural Ontario at the cabinet table, making rural voices heard. Instead, the minister has ignored the plea from 166 municipalities, the vast majority in rural Ontario, that have said unequivocally that the fire sale of Hydro One is a bad deal for rural Ontario. The minister knows this fire sale is a bad deal for rural Ontario. Mr. Speaker, when will the minister stand up for the people of rural Ontario

and tell his Premier why this is a bad deal for rural Ontario?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Well, thanks—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm still standing.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, I'm still standing.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker.

The question from the Leader of the Opposition is like a fastball down the middle of the plate, and let me tell you why. I was a city councillor in Peterborough in 1998-99, when the government—

Interjections.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I went through what was called then the Who Does What exercise. Anybody who served on municipal council during that period of time knows exactly what it was. It was a “who got done in” exercise. That party over there downloaded 43% of all the roads and bridges in eastern Ontario. Shame on them for not funding that and dumping it down.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Minister of Agriculture: First, the minister kept quiet on the neonic pesticides issue and now he sits silent on the Hydro One fire sale while rural municipalities are pleading for him to stand up for rural Ontario.

It's interesting that among the 166 municipalities that say this is a bad deal for Ontario are Peterborough and Peterborough county. In the past, the minister was on the record saying he would keep Hydro One in public hands. The minister knows that his own constituents and over 70% of residents in Ontario are against this bad deal.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Eglinton–Lawrence.

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question to the minister is, will he finally stand up for his constituents in Peterborough, listen to his city council and say this is a bad deal for rural Ontario?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Jeff Leal: The Leader of the Opposition just pitched another fastball down the middle of the plate. I'd like to report what the Leader of the Opposition said on May 5, 2015: “I generally believe that the private sector can do a better job than the public sector. I generally think market conditions would be helpful for a lot of government agencies.”

And then on May 15: "I obviously like market conditions. I know how the private sector runs like a business."

Mr. Speaker, he should ask me another question, the third ball down the middle of the plate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again for the minister: We know the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm actually trying to get the—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Niagara West—Glanbrook, I'm trying to get the attention of them, and you're not helping.

Mr. Tim Hudak: There's three.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Oh, no, don't engage.

Please ask your question.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Minister of Agriculture: We know the minister won't stand up for rural Ontario on the neonic ban. We know the minister will not stand up for his own constituents in Peterborough, by virtue of the motion passed by Peterborough city council. But maybe he can support agriculture in Ontario—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Eglinton—Lawrence, second time.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, I'm asking the Minister of Agriculture if he will support the incredible work by the member for Huron—Bruce, who is putting forward a motion to recognize the importance of agriculture and food literacy, and introduce it into the high schools. Will the minister support this great motion today?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, I think the Leader of the Opposition just walked in the winning run this afternoon against the Texas Rangers with that question. The answer is simple: Yes.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm proud to be wearing my blue and white today to support the Blue Jays.

My question is to the Premier. The people of Ontario don't want this Premier to sell off our public hydro system. They have been writing; they have been signing petitions; they have been demonstrating, Speaker, but this Premier has ignored them and has ignored their legitimate concerns.

She promised to consult, but so far she's only consulting with wealthy investors. She promised to listen, but so far she's only listening to her embedded banker, Speaker. This Premier doesn't care what the people of Ontario think. Why is she ignoring Ontarians and plowing ahead

with the sell-off of Hydro One against the public's wishes?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As the leader of the third party knows full well, what we have said is that we are going to broaden the ownership in Hydro One. I'm sure when she's talking to folks in communities, she makes it clear that that is a portion of the electricity system in Ontario, that it's part of the distribution system and the transmission system, and that it is a system that is already mixed in terms of private and public deliverers. I'm sure she makes that clear, Mr. Speaker.

I'm sure she also makes it clear that we said we were going to leverage existing assets in order to invest in the infrastructure assets that we know we need into the future, because that's what this is about. It's about the roads and the bridges, the water systems around the province, the transit that we know we need in order to be able to compete globally.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What I can tell you for sure, Speaker, is that the people of Ontario do darn well know what Hydro One is, and they don't want it sold off.

The Premier thinks she knows better than Ontarians, though. Most Ontarians oppose the sell-off of Hydro One. Meanwhile, a significant majority of Ontarians also favour modest increases to the taxes of our largest corporations, Speaker. The government's own report showed that by raising corporate tax rates by 1%, they could raise \$700 million a year. That's almost double the annual—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Transportation.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: —expenditure that they expect to make through their sell-off of Hydro One, Speaker.

Why is this Premier plowing ahead with this unnecessary sell-off against the will of Ontarians?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, as the leader of the third party knows, every municipal leader in this province, Mr. Speaker, is looking to the provincial government—and also to the federal government, quite frankly—for investments in infrastructure. They know that they need to be able to make those investments. They can't do it on their own. They know they need a partner in the provincial government to invest in provincial infrastructure that links our communities and to work with municipalities to make those investments.

1050

The leader of the third party talks about tax increases. She knows that in our budget, we did increase taxes. She also knows that when she talks about a corporate tax hike, she's not talking about it in the context of a competitive business environment because that doesn't seem to be a concern of hers. She also knows that she has spent that corporate tax hike 50 times. She spent it on education; she spent it on social services; she spent it on infrastructure—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This Premier knows that over 170 municipal leaders have said no to the sell-off of Hydro One. This Premier knows that our combined corporate tax rate here in the province of Ontario is lower than that of Alabama, and she should be ashamed of that, not proud of it.

The Premier is presenting the people of Ontario with a false choice, because the fact is that she had a choice. She could have chosen to ask the most profitable corporations to pay just a little bit more. This would allow us to build the transit and the infrastructure that this province so desperately needs. But instead, she is cynically insisting on selling off Hydro One.

When will the Premier do the right thing and put a stop to this wrong-headed privatization, just stop this direction, and make a better choice for the people of Ontario and the generations to come?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The NDP is presenting the people of Ontario with a mythical solution. The fact is, this is the kind of magical thinking that would not result in the building of transit, because every time there is a challenge put forward in terms of revenue that's needed, in terms of investment that's needed, whether it's in transit, whether it's in roads and bridges, whether it's in health care or whether it's in education, the leader of the third party trots out the same number and the same solution.

The reality is that under her lack of a—

Interjections.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: With her lack of a plan, Mr. Speaker, there would be no new alignment of Highway 7 between Kitchener and Guelph, there would be no Highway 401 improvements in London and Highway 417 in Ottawa, and there would be no Maley Drive extension in Sudbury because you cannot do any of those things without the funding to make—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE AGREEMENT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Every time this Premier needs money, she picks the pockets of everyday Ontarians and makes this society less fair in Ontario, Speaker.

My question is for the Premier. The Trans-Pacific Partnership has a lot of people very worried. This Premier has been happy to hurl attacks at Stephen Harper when it suits her federal leader's purposes, but on his far-reaching secret trade deal, she's suddenly excited by Harper's plans, despite the fact that the TPP could not only roll back environmental progress made under previous agreements, it could also restrict Internet freedom.

OpenMedia has said that the TPP "will criminalize our online activities, censor the web, and cost everyday users money."

The people of Ontario want to know: At what point will this Premier actually draw a line and say enough to the dangerous provisions in Harper's TPP?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The leader of the third party knows that there is a period of ratification now as the details of the plan are made clear. What I have said is that we have some concerns; we absolutely do have some concerns. We have some concerns about agriculture and what the implications of the agreement would mean. We have concerns about the auto parts sector. Obviously, the auto industry is extremely important to the people of Ontario, and we have some concerns about what the implications would be.

But there are also opportunities. If you look across the country, there are opportunities for industry to find new markets and to be able to expand.

We are taking a cautious approach, but we are not irresponsibly washing our hands of opportunities that may exist for the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Economists warn that the TPP could drive away one quarter of Canada's auto manufacturing. Guess what, Speaker? That's mostly in Ontario. The fact that Stephen Harper is throwing a billion dollars at the auto sector shows very clearly that even he knows it will be bad for manufacturing. And Jim Balsillie, the founder of BlackBerry, is sounding alarm bells about the impact of the TPP on the tech sector.

The people of Ontario, of this province, deserve to know why their Premier is jumping on the bandwagon with her federal leader to back this bad trade deal. Why is the Premier of this province—of this province—willing to accept a deal that kills 20,000 jobs in Ontario's auto sector and threatens Ontario's burgeoning tech sector?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I'm not jumping on a bandwagon. I'm not completely supportive. I have said that we are concerned about certain areas in the deal. We need to see the language. We need to understand exactly what the details are. We need to understand the implications for industry in Ontario.

But we also need to know where there are opportunities. This is an agreement that was forged for the whole country, and I understand that we are here in Ontario. It is my job to stand up for the people and the industries in this province, and I will do that. But we also have to understand that we're part of a federation, and we need to understand what the implications and the opportunities are for all provinces and territories across the country.

So I'm not jumping on a bandwagon. I'm saying: Let's look at it, let's figure out where the cautions are and let's figure out where the opportunities are.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier cannot have it both ways. She can't say one thing to the Empire Club and say something totally opposite in this Legislature.

The chorus of voices against the TPP is growing. Prominent US legislators and former Secretary of State

Hillary Clinton have now stated their opposition to the TPP, because it will unfairly benefit big US drug companies at the expense of patients, Speaker, and because it will push North American wages down even further.

Ontario families are already struggling with stagnant wages and cannot afford to be squeezed further. At what point will the Premier of this province stop going along with her federal leader and Stephen Harper in their race to the bottom and instead stand up for Ontarians?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I believe that saying that there are cautions that we have to be very clear about in this trade deal, understanding that there may be sectors like the auto sector, like the supply managed sector where we have to be very, very careful that there are supports in place—I think that is standing up for the people of Ontario. I also think it's standing up for the people of Ontario when, if there is an opportunity for us to strengthen our export capacity, to find markets that are going to help our businesses to grow—I think that's standing up for the people of Ontario as well.

The fact that the leader of the third party can't deal with that complexity is not the problem of the people of Ontario. It is complex. It is a complex global economy, and as soon as she discovers that, the better off we all are.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you. I—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm expecting everyone to do that. When I stand, you stop.
New question.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is to the Premier. Last week, after the senseless violence that struck the Ottawa Valley, I asked the Attorney General just how many convicted offenders are released despite their refusal to sign probation orders. The Attorney General said she didn't know.

In January 2014, Anastasia Kuzyk went to the OPP because Mr. Borutski violated his probation order, broke into her home and violently beat her. Ms. Kuzyk said that she thought he was going to kill her. His violent past should have raised every conceivable red flag. Just nine months after Mr. Borutski was released on probation, Anastasia Kuzyk, Nathalie Warmerdam and Carol Culleton are dead, allegedly at his hands.

Mr. Speaker, why has the Premier failed on her commitment to combating domestic violence and take immediate action to ensure violent offenders are more closely monitored?

1100

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services is going to want to comment in the supplementary. What I want to just say is that this was a horrible, horrible tragedy. When it happened, it was shocking to everyone involved. My

heart absolutely goes out to all of the families and, quite frankly, to all of the communities. It was just a terrible tragedy.

It highlights why it's so important that we all work together, whether it's on the select committee or the changes that we are going to be bringing forward to legislation to make sure that there are supports for victims, that there are more protections put in place for people who are dealing with sexual assault and violence and helping them to come forward.

As I say, the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services will respond in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Laurie Scott: It absolutely was a tragedy, and we could have tried to prevent it. This government has failed to protect these three innocent women from a dangerous repeat offender who refused to comply with any court-ordered restrictions. This government is now putting more women at risk with its decision to cut the length of the Partner Assault Response Program from 16 weeks to 12 weeks because there are more than 3,000 offenders who are on the wait-list.

Three years ago the Domestic Violence Death Review Committee compiled a list of risk factors for enhanced assessment and safety, factors that the government should have acted on to prevent the murders of Anastasia, Nathalie and Carol. Their families, at the very least, deserve an apology and an explanation. Will the Premier explain why she's failing to act on the province's own committee's report to prevent the victims of domestic violence?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I also want to echo the Premier and all members of this House. The kind of incident that took place a few weeks ago in Wilno is shocking and is unacceptable. We know that domestic violence is despicable and absolutely unacceptable anywhere in Ontario. Everyone has the right to feel safe in their home and in their community.

All police services in Ontario are required to have policies and procedures in place for managing domestic violence investigations. To support police services across the province, the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services has developed a domestic violence occurrences guideline, and police services in Ontario have designated a domestic violence coordinator to provide a consistent approach for responding to domestic violence incidents. Not to mention, we are putting emphasis on training through the Ontario Police College to make sure that we've got the appropriate training for our police officers to avoid domestic violence.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE AGREEMENT

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is for the Premier. Some 20,000 good-paying manufacturing jobs in the auto sector and manufacturing sectors are estimated to be at risk from the secretive Trans-Pacific Partnership trade

agreement that the leader of the Liberal Party plans on waiting and seeing about. But let me localize this for you: In my community of Windsor and Essex county, that's as many as 3,000 good-paying manufacturing jobs, a community that is already reeling from the highest unemployment rate in Canada, one that has seen the exodus of good-paying manufacturing jobs to the lowest-wage jurisdictions on the planet over the last 10 years. Is the Premier prepared to tell the people of my community of Windsor and Essex county that she will indeed wait and see what happens with the Trans-Pacific Partnership?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There was no waiting and seeing. We had the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Affairs go to Atlanta, where the deal was being finalized, to express concerns, to have a meeting with the federal minister, because, as the member knows, provinces and territories were not included by the federal government in the discussions; they weren't consulted with. We didn't have any idea of where they were going. We didn't have information about what the issues were going to be at the table. So we had to insert ourselves into the process, which is why the minister went to Atlanta.

We are not being passive in this in any way, nor are we being passive in terms of supporting our industries. We are very, very actively engaged with businesses across the province to work with them so that they can thrive. Part of that, Mr. Speaker, to go back to the question by his leader, is that we're investing in infrastructure that's needed by communities all across—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: The Premier has repeatedly said that she doesn't know what to expect from the TPP trade agreement. But she can't expect the people of Windsor and Essex county, with a 9.5% unemployment rate, to just "wait and see."

Stephen Harper said, in September, that the auto industry wouldn't like what was in the TPP trade agreement. That's why he's bracing for this impact with money announcements.

At what point will the Premier admit that she has absolutely no idea how to help the people of Windsor and Essex county withstand another hit from the expected TPP trade agreement?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I said in every answer that I've given on this agreement, we have a concern about the auto sector, there's no doubt about that; we have been very clear. But the deal has been negotiated by the federal government. The deal has been negotiated without consultation with the Premiers of the provinces and the territories.

It is my responsibility to make sure that we put forward the cautions and that we make sure that the federal government understands that we are at risk in terms of a number of our sectors. Beyond that, it is very important, where there are opportunities for our industries to grow, that we take advantage of those opportunities.

We have to work with the federal government, which has negotiated this deal, to make sure that both those things happen: the protections and the opportunities.

YOUTH SERVICES

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Last Wednesday I picked up the Toronto Star and read about a number of changes that will benefit children and youth in care. I understand that these changes are making it easier to connect these vulnerable young people with a more permanent living situation and, hopefully, a place to call home. In an editorial this weekend, the Star applauded these changes in saying, "It's not just the right thing for the province to give these kids a helping hand. It's a fiscally prudent move that will make a big difference in their lives as they become adults."

In my community of Kingston and the Islands, the wonderful dedicated staff and volunteers at Family and Children's Services of Frontenac, Lennox and Addington work so hard to provide safe and nurturing environments for more than 350 young people under their care. I know that they would also be interested in learning more about these changes.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, can the minister please inform the House on the important changes she announced last week?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to thank the member from Kingston and the Islands for taking such an active interest in what's going on in terms of adoption in Ontario. It's an excellent question.

We made these changes because we recognize that there's a need to do more to support permanency in our child welfare system. The research is very, very clear: Children experience better outcomes when they have a stable and permanent living situation. That's why we're making these changes to strengthen the adoption system so more children and youth can find forever families.

Among the specific steps we're taking are measures to make it easier for traditionally harder-to-place children to be adopted. We're supporting families to adopt older children and we're expanding eligibility for our adoption subsidies so that more children can be connected with their forever families. This is great news for children in care in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I'd like to thank the minister for the update and for this exciting news.

I'm glad that more children in care will be connected with a permanent and stable living situation and benefit from the stability and care of a family. I greatly admire the foster parents who strive to make a positive difference in the lives of so many deserving children and youth. I know that sometimes it can be a hard adjustment, as some children and youth are coping with emotional and/or behavioural challenges. That is one reason why proper stability, support and, of course, friendship and affection are so important. I am proud that our government is supporting families in this way. I'm also glad to read on Twitter that these are changes that the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth supports.

Can the minister please explain how the changes she announced will help children focus on their education?

1110

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: There are a number of changes in the announcement from last week that we're all very proud of, but I want to talk about children in care who are not progressing on the same time line for finishing high school as children who live with families, Speaker. I think we all agree it's our responsibility to ensure these young people are given every opportunity to succeed, and quite often that happens and starts with a high school diploma. So last week we announced funding that allows crown wards to stay with their foster families past the age of 18 while they finish school. This means they'll be able to maintain the stability necessary to finish high school without disruption to their home environment.

We heard from youth and we heard from the child and youth advocate that this was the right thing to do, and we absolutely agree. It's the right thing for our children and youth, and we're very, very proud to be doing this.

DOCTORS' FEES

Mrs. Gila Martow: Of course, go, Jays, go. We're all very excited for this afternoon.

My question is directed to the Minister of Health. Mr. Speaker, some of us may recall, way back in the year 2000, the negotiation of doctor compensation when the Ontario government agreed to cover medical liability protection costs in exchange for direct remuneration. This was considered a barter system, paying the soaring malpractice insurance costs in exchange for less taxpayer money to doctors.

With this government's repeated cuts to doctors' service fees, coupled with the Liberal government's proposed Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, is this government prepared to cover the high pension costs for medical staff in doctors' offices, as you did for medical liability protection costs?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question. It has many parts to it. I'm proud that as part of our past agreements with the OMA we continue to reimburse them for a portion of their liability insurance. I think that's something—in fact, it goes all the way back to the mid-1980s and something that every government since then has supported.

I'm not sure exactly where the member opposite is trying to go. Our physicians in this province—and I say this with pride, being one of them—are the best-paid in Canada, as they should be. We have some of the brightest minds, the best physicians and experts providing the highest quality of health care to this province, and that's as it should be.

We're obviously in a difficult financial time. We've asked our doctors to take a modest reduction in the fees that we provide for the services they provide to Ontarians. But they are the best-paid in this country, probably in North America, possibly beyond. That will remain as such.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Gila Martow: Again to the Minister of Health: I would just say that I think that a lot of doctors would disagree with some of your comments.

The minister claims that there will be no new money available to pay our doctors. This Liberal government expects the total amount paid to all our doctors collectively to remain the same year after year, with no extra money to account for our increasing population, our aging population, up-to-date medical treatments or the rising costs of running a clinic.

We certainly do not hear, for example, the Minister of Education speak in these terms. Imagine a neighbourhood school with a specific budget for teacher salaries. Now imagine the same school accepting 60 more students and requiring two new teachers. No one would consider it reasonable to require all the teachers at the school to give up a portion of their salaries to fund the two new teachers. Why, then, does the Minister of Health expect doctors to give up a portion of their fees?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to say as well that the average compensation for our doctors has gone up by 60% since we took office. In fact, our budget, the envelope available for physicians, isn't remaining the same. It's going up by 1.25% this year; it's going up by 1.25% next year. It is increasing.

But I have to say to the member opposite that I would have hoped she'd also reference our other health care professionals. Our PSWs: We've increased their wages. Our nurse practitioners: We have substantial issues in recruitment and retention of our nurse practitioners and other health care professionals. We have to provide more funds, as we've committed to do, to home care; to mental health services, as well.

So we're asking our doctors, in the face of a 60% increase, far in excess of any health care professional, to actually take a pause, a modest reduction, so we can attend to those other priorities.

CHILD CARE

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: My question is to the Premier. Last November, the Liberal caucus, including the Minister of Education, voted to support the NDP's motion calling for the province to work with the federal government to provide low-cost child care spaces. However, after it was clear that the NDP was the only willing federal partner ready to support \$15-a-day child care, the Premier decided to put partisan Liberal interests—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Order.

Finish, please.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: The Premier decided to put partisan Liberal interests ahead of the needs of Ontario families.

I wrote to the Premier in August asking whether she intended to honour or break the commitment her government made last year. She has not answered, so I ask again: Will the Premier honour or break her govern-

ment's commitment to ensure that new child care spaces in Ontario will cost no more than \$15 a day?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate the steady stream of questions from the Mulcair campaign. It's very encouraging. I would say to the member that it is not at all clear what a Mulcair plan for child care would actually cost the province of Ontario.

Of course, we have made significant investments in child care and will continue to do so, Mr. Speaker. Child care funding has increased in Ontario from \$532.4 million to over \$1 billion. That's a 90% increase.

We are committed to child care. We understand how important it is, and we will continue to remain committed to child care.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It sounds to me like the Premier is not willing to honour her commitment.

My question is to the Minister of Education. In order to sustain child care spaces, you need good neighbourhood schools. Less than a week ago, the government re-announced a promise to provide child care that is close to home, meaning it would be in schools. But since 2011, the minister has forced the closure of at least 88 schools across the province. Five schools in Windsor-Essex are currently at risk of immediate closure.

How can the minister promise child care spaces in schools when she is actively forcing the closure of good community schools?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I was very pleased last week to announce the beginning of a program for investment in about 4,000 new child care spaces. We did the first 13 of those child cares. What the member opposite is missing is that in some cases what we are doing is actually creating the opportunity to take child care that was in the community and move it to a school, or take child care that was previously located in one school and build it in a new school. That's something that we intend to continue doing.

Some of those spaces are for four- and five-year-olds' before- and after-care. The particular group of spaces we announced last week are actually for preschoolers. In fact, we announced almost 800 new spaces just last week alone.

PAY EQUITY

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Labour.

Women and men should be on equal footing in today's society. Earlier this week, our Premier spoke about a group of inspiring Canadians, the Famous Five, who tirelessly advocated for women's rights.

Our government has demonstrated its commitment to women's equality by helping women get better access to the workforce through major investments in education, training programs, full-day kindergarten, child care, and also through the work of the Pay Equity Commission, the Ontario Women's Directorate and the Ontario Human

Rights Commission. These independent provincial agencies help to increase the economic security of women and eliminate systemic barriers.

However, Mr. Speaker, each day in my riding of Scarborough-Agincourt, I hear the same issue: There's a wage gap between genders that unfairly disadvantages women in our province.

Speaker, through you to the minister: What is being done to ensure that Ontario moves forward towards eliminating the wage gap?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd like to thank the member for this very important question on a very important issue.

Speaker, the sad fact is, women on average in Ontario do not earn as much as men, and that needs to change. As the member knows, Minister MacCharles and I previously announced our Gender Wage Gap Strategy Steering Committee. The panel is made up of two external advisers: Linda Davis, the past president of the Business and Professional Women's Clubs of Ontario; and Dr. Parbudyal Singh, who is a leading expert in human resource management and in labour relations. And we've got the Pay Equity Commissioner for Ontario, Emanuela Heynick, and Nancy Austin from my own ministry.

1120

The member's question could not have come at a better time. Today we're releasing our consultation paper, announcing the kickoff on October 26 right across Ontario. Speaker, this is a very important issue whose time has come. We're committed to developing a strategy that's going to close the wage gap between men and women.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you to the minister for the answer. I'm happy the consultation will begin shortly, and I'm looking forward to the recommendations that will be put forward during this process.

I also know this is a complex issue caused by many different factors. I know that all women across economic spectrums are affected by the wage gap, but the gap is more pronounced for women who are minorities, aboriginals, newcomers or living with disabilities.

Last Saturday, I hosted a health and government fair in my riding of Scarborough-Agincourt. I heard a number of issues from new Canadians about the wage gap issue. The existence of a gender wage gap is indicative of barriers facing women that prevent them from making a full contribution to the provincial economy.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can he please inform the House of the goals of this steering committee and the steps it would take to achieve these goals?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd like to thank the member again for that excellent question.

Our goal, clearly, is to increase fairness for women in Ontario by closing the gender wage gap. To help us do that, the consultations are going to examine ways that government, business, labour, other organizations and even individuals can work together to identify oppor-

tunities, remove the barriers and close that gender wage gap. It's going to examine the role of women at work, in their families and in their communities, and how this impacts on the gap.

Following the consultations, the committee will be responsible for providing me, along with the minister responsible for women's issues, with recommendations that can assist us in achieving the goal we all have of closing the gender wage gap in Ontario.

I look forward to seeing the recommendations that come back from this committee and taking the next step necessary to make Ontario a fairer province. As I said earlier, this is an issue whose time has come. We aim to deal with it.

VICTIMS OF CRIME

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is to the Attorney General, through the Speaker. Muskoka Victim Services usage is growing exponentially. Over the past five years alone, the yearly caseload jumped from 185 to 822 individuals. That's a 444% increase.

This local organization provides critical immediate support for individuals and families faced with challenges following crime or tragic events. They do tremendous work.

Because of the changes the Liberal government made to the funding model, Muskoka Victim Services is being forced to do more with less. A funding cut of 10% has left the organization scrambling to find ways to effectively serve their clients. Speaker, will the minister explain why the government cut funding to Muskoka Victim Services?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: It's really a good question, because in the past there was no consistency with these programs. A few years ago, we did review the program. We did analyze it, and we are now attributing the money to the request for service.

But we know that in rural communities and in the north, the population is not there, but they need the service. So we have a special addition in the envelope for rural and northern communities. It's being reviewed every year. If there is an increase, then the envelope is readjusted.

I will say to the member: Please speak to me, and I will give more details with the information in hand.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: Again through the Speaker to the Attorney General: As the trend shows, demand is increasing for local services provided for victims. With the hard work of the organization and over 50 volunteers, they are doing their best to meet the increasing demand. Muskoka Victim Services has had to resort to producing a fundraising video to help make up their budget shortfall.

Speaker, shouldn't increasing access to victim services be a priority for the Liberal government, regardless of where in Ontario a person chooses to live?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Of course, victim services is a very, very important program and the support for those who need the service. That is why, in 2015, we created Victim Crisis Assistance Ontario. As I said in my previous answer, we are not reducing the overall envelope. Instead, we are redistributing the funding to meet service demand. Under the new funding model, 28 of the 47 agencies that deliver these programs received an increase. Again, these services are revised regularly, and if there is an increase in demand, the envelope will be increased.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Last year, my colleague the member for Hamilton Mountain raised the issue of a young man, Cameron Laflamme, who has autism and requires intensive one-on-one care and the supports provided through a day program. The issue then was that he was about to age out of school and his mother, needing to work full-time, couldn't afford to put him into a day program. Happily, funding was provided and Cameron received the care he needed and his mum was able to continue to work. But now the family has learned that the funds available are going to run out this November and will not cover the full annual cost of her son's day program after all.

What exactly does the Premier expect this family to do if the funds aren't available?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to thank the member for the important question. As I do with the critic for children and youth services from your party, I'm always happy to discuss cases with her to the extent I can. I can't get into specifics of a case here, of course, but I think we work very well in terms of identifying issues in her riding and other ridings, and our regional office often reaches out to the families who may need additional support.

I know very well that families caring for young people with autism face very unique challenges, and we are very determined, as a government, to make further progress for these children and their families. That's why our government invests nearly \$190 million annually in autism services. That's an increase of more than 300% since 2003. But we know there's more to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Andrea Horwath: There's no doubt that this family was grateful that the work of the member from Hamilton Mountain with this minister helped resolve this case several months ago, but the problem is that this young man, Cameron Laflamme, has not been cured of autism. He still has autism and still needs the program. They're in crisis right now. They can't wait for any other solution. This young man has aged out of school. He's been placed in a day program that works, where he actually gets the care he needs.

The solution is clear—in fact, the minister helped find it. But not only are the Liberals pulling the rug out from

under Cameron now, several months later, but they're failing thousands of families just like his. Cameron's mom can't quit her job in order to provide full-time support for him while waiting years for funding to come through.

When are this government and this Premier going to commit to helping Cameron's family, and others like them, in a permanent way that helps them over time, not just for a small window?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Just as my colleague the Minister of Children and Youth Services has said, in individual cases, of course, we would welcome further information. I'm not aware of this particular situation, but if the individual is now an adult, the individual and the family need to consult with their local developmental service organization.

I would certainly urge the member to consult with my ministry. We are dedicated to ensuring that people have appropriate services. We acknowledge the great efforts that families and caregivers do play—the role they play in their commitment to the individual they are caring for. This is precisely why, in our budget, we did increase the budget for developmental services in this province.

1130

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Daiene Vernile: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, infertility is a very serious medical issue that affects about one in six families here in Ontario. All different types of families want to know the joy of bringing a child into the world, but for some, they're not able to do so easily. Going through infertility treatments can be extremely trying on people physically, emotionally and financially. I can tell you that I have a family member who knows this all too well.

There have been a number of constituents in my riding of Kitchener Centre who have come to see me to ask how our government is supporting Ontarians who are facing these challenges as they try to conceive. Mr. Speaker, can the minister please tell us what our government is doing to support people who do want to grow their families and who might be eligible for these services?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I want to thank the member from Kitchener Centre for this important question. It's an important question for thousands and thousands of Ontarians. She's absolutely right that the implications of infertility can be incredibly emotionally painful. Unless you've experienced it personally, you can't even begin to fathom the impact it can have on your life and that of your family.

Until recently, access to fertility services has not been possible for many families because of the cost involved. But last week I was extremely proud to announce that our government is expanding access for all Ontarians, regardless of sex or gender, sexual orientation or family status.

Families come in all shapes and sizes in this province, Mr. Speaker. This program will begin in December of this year.

For women needing access to in vitro fertilization, our publicly funded program will continue to the cost of one cycle of IVF for all women under the age of 43.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I want to thank the minister for that answer. I also want to add that family really is a gift. Every day I'm very proud of my husband and my three awesome kids. Children are the future in this province and in our country, and everyone deserves a chance at parenthood. I know that my constituents in Kitchener Centre are going to be very encouraged to hear about this news that, as of December, our government is going to be expanding access to all Ontarians who are struggling with infertility.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care: What are we doing to ensure that fertility services are not only accessible and equitable, but are also safe?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, patient safety remains my number one priority as the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Ontario will be working—the government will be working—with the College of Physicians and Surgeons in order to provide stronger quality and safety oversight in the infertility sector.

Our government is also working to improve safety and accessibility by expanding the definition of what one cycle of IVF is. It means that Ontario is going to contribute to the cost of one egg retrieval and also cover the transfer of all viable embryos one at a time, what's known as single embryo transfer. By expanding this definition, patients get more chances to conceive and are more likely to have a safe, healthy pregnancy and delivery. In fact, single embryo transfer will dramatically reduce the chance of having multiple births, multiple pregnancies, and reduce the morbidity, risks and costs associated with that.

HOSPICE CARE

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Mr. Speaker, according to Matthews House Hospice in my riding, the organization's unfunded four beds hosted 90 patients last year, affording them a dignified death. This year that number sits at 41 clients so far. In addition, its community hospice service supported 487 individuals last year, and to date the organization has already been there for 380 clients.

The government has promised to fund 20 new hospices. They promised this in the 2014 budget. But Matthews House still isn't funded and we're nearing the end of 2015. Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell this House when the government will step up and fully fund Matthews House Hospice in Alliston?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I agree with the member opposite that, by reputation, Matthews House does an extraordin-

any job for individuals and families in extremely trying, emotionally difficult circumstances. That's why this government has made a commitment, as he mentioned, to fund an additional 20 new hospices across Ontario.

I've asked my parliamentary assistant, John Fraser—sorry, the member for Ottawa South—to actually lead a process where he's developing a palliative care strategy, renewing our end-of-life strategy. We were the first government, in 2005, to actually bring in an end-of-life strategy and attached more than \$100 million to that contribution. We were the first government in this province to actually fund hospices in the first place. We've made that commitment. Matthews House has a great reputation. The ministry is working directly with Matthews, as well as with our LHIN, on this particular issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Back to the minister: I thank the minister for that answer and I also want to take the opportunity to thank the honourable member for Ottawa South, Mr. Fraser, your parliamentary assistant, for touring Matthews House Hospice just recently. That was very good of him to meet with the staff and volunteers.

But I remind you that other hospices in the area—for the south end of Simcoe county the only hospice we have available is a couple of beds in Richmond Hill.

When you see numbers like 80 or 90 clients having a dignified death at Matthews House each year, year after year—you didn't have to pay for any of the bricks and mortar. You didn't pay for any of the overhead so far. You are paying for a couple of PSWs through home care. It's a good deal. They've diverted at least 60 people from dying in the local hospital, our very small Alliston Stevenson Memorial Hospital. It's a fraction of the cost to spend your last days in palliative care, in great care, with the volunteers and staff at the local hospice rather than the hospital.

So, Minister, I ask you again: When can you announce that you're going to fund Matthews House Hospice in Alliston?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: As the member opposite has alluded to, I know there are a tremendous number of volunteers as well as the staff who work at the hospital who are doing an incredible job, day in and day out, for the individuals through Matthews House, the hospice that the member opposite is referring to.

We've made a commitment to fund 20 more hospices. We stand by that commitment. I think the member opposite would appreciate, as we had in 2005 with our end-of-life strategy, that we're taking a very principled and co-ordinated approach to this across the province to identify those hospices, like Matthews House, that are deserving of the funding in this new commitment.

I would request that both Matthews as well as the member opposite give my parliamentary assistant, the member for Ottawa South, that modest amount of time remaining for him to be able to consult. He mentioned that my PA had visited Matthews House, but give him that time to do the appropriate work so we can do this in a co-ordinated, proper fashion.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I want to add my own “go, Jays, go,” but I would also have to make an announcement that I'm saddened. This is the last day for our pages. I would like to offer, on behalf of all of us, our gratitude to this wonderful group of pages who have served us well.

Applause.

USE OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES IN HOUSE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order, the member from Eglinton—Lawrence.

Mr. Mike Colle: I wonder: Is it in order in this House for one member to take pictures of other members while they're in this House? I thought you made it very clear that we are not to use camera devices to take pictures of members while they're in this House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Eglinton—Lawrence is indeed mentioning a protocol and a convention that is not to be done. I have spoken about this before: that all devices are not to be used for anything else other than their personal use, and quietly and unassumingly. I would anticipate that all members are honourable in that way, that they would not use that for any purpose other than what has been agreed upon.

I would also like to take a moment to point out to you that, regrettably—and I say this with all concern—that if tweeting is going to be taking place about issues that happen in this House, I highly recommend that it be accurate if it's going to happen. I would recommend against it.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1135 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: They're making their way into the chamber as we speak, but I'd like to welcome to the House today: president of the Bruce County Federation of Agriculture, Pat Jilesen; president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, Don McCabe; the executive director of Ontario Agri-Food Education Inc., Colleen Smith; Sarah Baird, who holds down the fort in my Blyth constituency office, and her husband, Ron Baird.

Mr. Mike Colle: I have two guests here from the great riding of Eglinton—Lawrence. I have David Heimlich here and Jon Telch, who are part of the Nation Leagues.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

NATIONAL FAMILY WEEK

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I ask all members to join me in recognizing October 5 to 11 as National Family Week.

Families are the heart and soul of our communities across the province. If you think of your victories—in life, in business and, indeed, in politics—many of us appreciate and acknowledge the important roles our mothers and fathers have played in our successes. I know for me, I am most proud of the fact that I am a mom.

The Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs says that families are the natural place for children to grow and reach their potential.

I want to thank the many organizations, staff and volunteers who support families across Ontario, including the Caledon Parent-Child Centre, the Dufferin Early Years Centre and the Peel Family Education Centre.

Every child deserves to be part of a loving family. They are, first and foremost, the most important support system for the majority of children. They are there to help guide a child through the good and bad times of life, and to help each child reach their full potential through instilling values that will guide them throughout their lives.

Families are also the first opportunity for children to interact with others, and help instill the necessary social skills that are needed through life.

A family is a community within a community that teaches each and every one of us the importance of nurturing our community. Family is also a place where everyone can learn something from one another; whether you are a parent, an uncle, an aunt, a brother, a sister or a grandparent, we all learn from each other.

As we prepare to celebrate Thanksgiving this weekend, I hope everybody will have an opportunity to spend time with their loved ones and be thankful for your family.

HEALTHY EATING

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Recognizing that inaccessible and unaffordable healthy food in the North is a key contributing factor to higher rates of chronic diseases and food insecurity, the government of Manitoba just announced a pilot program to reduce the high costs of healthy food staples in 10 remote First Nation and northern communities. AFFIRM, Affordable Food in Remote Manitoba, is a retail subsidy program designed to help reduce shipping costs over and above the paltry subsidy offered by Nutrition North Canada.

Presently, of the 25 Far North communities in Kenora-Rainy River alone, only 11 communities receive some form of subsidy from Nutrition North Canada, with most receiving a meagre five-cents-a-kilogram reduction in shipping costs, leaving healthy foods out of reach for northerners.

But rather than point the finger at the federal government and wait for it to fix the problem, Premier Selinger took a leadership role and created a program to help northern Manitobans.

I'm proud of the work that New Democrats are doing to help improve health outcomes for northerners in other provinces and believe more can be done by this Liberal government to look after northern Ontarians.

I am once again calling on Premier Wynne to develop a strategy to help northerners regardless of what the federal government does or does not do. It is incumbent upon our provincial government to step up and look after all of our citizens within our borders. Other provinces are leading by example and showing that it should and can be done.

ONTARIO AGRICULTURE WEEK

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'm pleased to rise today to talk about Halton's kickoff to Ontario Agriculture Week. The event was held at Country Heritage Park, one of our region's hidden gems, and we were delighted to have the Honourable Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, Jeff Leal, with us.

The event, entitled Future of Food and Farming Forum 2041, brought agriculture business leaders, stakeholders and government officials together to discuss trends that will dramatically transform our food and farming landscape.

It was an important event for our community, not just because it helped kick off agri-week, but because the agricultural sector plays an invaluable role in Halton. It is one of the pillars of our economy, providing stable, meaningful employment for workers, and it is a celebrated foundation of our region's history and development.

At Country Heritage Park, they even offer educational field trips for students in grades K to 8 to come and learn about various agricultural practices, histories and the importance of farming.

The food and farming forum was a chance to bring key people together to discuss important issues and celebrate the role that agriculture plays in our region. We are proud of our heritage, and I'm pleased that, through actions like Agriculture Week, this province is reminded of the importance that agriculture plays in our lives.

HYDRO RATES

Mrs. Julia Munro: Today I rise to draw attention to a motion that was recently adopted by the town of Innisfil, in my riding of York-Simcoe.

The town of Innisfil has expressed its concern regarding the rising electricity rates and the impact this has on Ontario's manufacturing sector, agricultural sector, tourism, and most of all, families. The town of Innisfil endorsed this motion, which was brought forward by the town of New Tecumseth and the township of North Stormont.

Voters in Ontario are worried about the Liberal fire sale of Hydro One that will result in increases to their already-too-high hydro bills, making Ontario a more and more unaffordable place to live, work and raise a family. Ontario's ever-rising electricity rates hinder the ability of businesses to compete on a level playing field with other jurisdictions, and therefore kill jobs.

Ontario has among the highest electricity rates in North America. If that is not enough, rates are expected

to rise 42% between 2013 and 2018. The financial burden this will continue to place on seniors, families and businesses cannot be overstated.

Voters in Ontario know that selling Hydro One is a short-sighted move. It is a shame that this Premier is moving forward without listening to the thousands—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Further members' statements?

DO GOOD DIVAS

Mr. Percy Hatfield: There's a small fundraising group in Windsor and Essex county called the Do Good Divas. They've been raising money for local health care initiatives for the past nine years. The Do Good Divas have raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for the local hospitals, our regional cancer care centre and even the Jumpstart program, which provides a nutritional breakfast for our school kids.

The Canada South Chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals has just named the Do Good Divas as this year's outstanding philanthropic group. They'll be honoured at an awards luncheon on November 5.

The Divas host an annual fundraiser called Diva Delights: A Girls' Night Out in Handbag Heaven. One thousand women come out to support this unique event, which features purses donated by celebrities, designers, retailers and generous individuals. There's a silent auction of more than 300 handbags, as well as a live auction of celebrity items. This year's event is on October 29, at the Caboto Club in Windsor. The highlight will be autographed handbags from Canadian recording artist Diana Krall, CTV's Marilyn Denis, Canadian Olympic medalist Clara Hughes, and Nashville star Carrie Underwood.

Once again, Bill Walker, the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, will be on hand as the auctioneer of these celebrity handbag donations. I'll be the MC, along with Jim Crichton, the local news anchor at our CTV station.

Speaker, allow me to congratulate all of the Do Good Divas. They are a group of about 40 active volunteers, and a few Diva dudes as well. Yes, Speaker, I am a Diva dude. My wife, Gail Simko, is the founder and president of the Do Good Divas. She and Lucy Fanson, Vicki Granger and Lindsay Lovecky make up the executive. Together they are doing good deeds for the health of our community.

Keep up the good work and congratulations on being named the philanthropic group of the year. Thank you, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You're welcome, dude.

1310

AURORA SENIORS ASSOCIATION

Mr. Chris Ballard: I appreciate this opportunity to tell the House about an important milestone in my riding of Newmarket-Aurora. It was in the early 1960s when

the women of Beta Sigma Phi sorority founded the Aurora Seniors Association. Back then, 75 seniors were members. Today more than 1,400 seniors are active members of the association.

I'm biased, but I think it is the best seniors' centre in Ontario, certainly in Canada. I will proudly admit that having reached a certain age myself I was able to join the association, and I have been warmly welcomed and enjoy Wednesday lunches. One day I look forward to using the well-equipped woodworking shop.

Yes, I know that it is shocking that I have reached a certain age, but I'm happy to say I'm there.

Ms. Soo Wong: What age is that?

Mr. Chris Ballard: The age? No, I'm not going to tell you my age.

Speaker, on Sunday, September 20, the Aurora Seniors Association celebrated the 10th anniversary of its new home. The Aurora Seniors Association just isn't an inward-looking group; it is also active in fundraising for groups like food banks, CHATS, Operation Smile and the Children's Wish Foundation. In fact, last year the volunteers prepared over 150 holiday gift baskets for the less fortunate.

I'd like to thank the past and current dedicated board members of the Aurora Seniors Association and the town of Aurora for its leadership and continued support. Thank you to everyone who makes that centre such a success.

PANDAS/PANS

Mr. Robert Bailey: I stand today to help raise awareness for a very important health issue in our province. Pediatric autoimmune neuropsychiatric disorder associated with streptococcus, known by the acronym PANDAS, and pediatric acute-onset neuropsychiatric syndrome, also known as PANS, are serious illnesses that are affecting the lives of young children across Ontario.

The PANDAS/PANS term refers to the sudden onset of obsessive-compulsive disorder, tics, anxiety, depression, irritability and regressive behaviour in children that cannot be explained by any other neurological or medical disorder, but that often occur following a strep infection.

Unfortunately, PANDAS/PANS is often misdiagnosed and untreated due to the lack of awareness both by the public and the medical community itself. The treatments for PANDAS/PANS vary by the needs of the child, but they do exist and may be as common as antibiotics or anti-inflammatory medications, but the condition must first be diagnosed correctly.

It is imperative that there be greater public awareness of this serious children's health issue, and more must be done to increase support for families dealing with the challenges of PANDAS and PANS at the local, provincial and national level.

October 9th is the international day of awareness for the illnesses of PANDAS/PANS, and I encourage all members of this Legislature to take time tomorrow to learn more about PANDAS/PANS and its impact in their

communities. Please visit www.pandasponsontario.org for more information on this important issue.

NATION LEAGUES

Mr. Mike Colle: Today I would like to recognize my constituent David Heimlich, who is in the Legislature today. He is here with his friend Jon Telch. David is a young entrepreneur, who is the founder and president of Nation Leagues. Nation Leagues operates recreational sports leagues all across the Toronto area and caters to people of all ages. One of the favourite sports that they play in this league is dodge ball.

Particularly, David is committed to ensuring that working professionals with hectic schedules have a fun and easily accessible means of playing sports, and engaging in healthy activity, while at the same time, supporting local charitable causes.

David is consistently organizing charitable sports tournaments for adults. Unique to other charitable tournaments, Nation Leagues encourages teams to select their own charity of choice. The winners of Nation Leagues tournaments, rather than receiving awards, see the tournament proceeds go to the charity of their choosing. Nation Leagues is proud to have partnered with and supported dozens of charities.

David and Nation Leagues wanted even more to benefit communities through sport. As a result, David has begun plans to run after-school programs in our schools, and it is a priority for David, basically, to give youth a chance to be healthy and at the same time raise some money for charity.

Perhaps we should arrange a dodge ball game between the government and the two opposition parties. There's the challenge, Mr. Speaker.

TASTE OF STREETSVILLE

Mr. Bob Delaney: Tonight is the final dinner serving for the sixth annual Taste of Streetsville fine dining promotion and fundraiser for Trillium Health Partners. Hosted by the Streetsville BIA, the Taste of Streetsville ran from September 10 through to tonight, October 8. Diners enjoyed a three-course, fixed-price menu for just \$30.

A dozen of our local restaurants—Andiamo, Cagneys, Cantina Mexicana, Cuchulainn's Irish Pub, Enzo's, Jing Thai, the Franklin House, Giorgio's, Goodfellas, Graydon Bar and Grill, Mondello Ristorante and Saucy—laid out their best to thank regular patrons, show their fare to new diners and raise money for our hospital.

Proceeds from every meal during the annual Taste of Streetsville are donated to the redevelopment of the emergency department at Credit Valley Hospital. I toured the emergency department this past summer to personally see the need for redesigned space, to maximize and better manage patient flow and to create separate, specialized treatment areas for pediatrics and seniors.

It's all over Thursday, October 8. There is still a night to enjoy the world's finest food in the heart of historic Streetsville.

Thank you to our local restaurateurs for your help with the hospital emergency department and for your best dishes once again this year.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

COMITÉ PERMANENT DE LA JUSTICE

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY

M. Shafiq Qaadri: Monsieur le Président, je demande la permission de déposer un rapport du Comité permanent de la justice, et je propose son adoption.

Speaker, I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Justice Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Trevor Day): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 52, An Act to amend the Courts of Justice Act, the Libel and Slander Act and the Statutory Powers Procedure Act in order to protect expression on matters of public interest / *Projet de loi 52, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les tribunaux judiciaires, la Loi sur la diffamation et la Loi sur l'exercice des compétences légales afin de protéger l'expression sur les affaires d'intérêt public.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated June 2, 2015, the bill is ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HUMAN RIGHTS CODE AMENDMENT ACT (GENETIC CHARACTERISTICS), 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT LE CODE DES DROITS DE LA PERSONNE (CARACTÉRISTIQUES GÉNÉTIQUES)

Mr. Colle moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 129, An Act to amend the Human Rights Code with respect to genetic characteristics / *Projet de loi 129, Loi modifiant le Code des droits de la personne en ce qui a trait aux caractéristiques génétiques.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Mike Colle: I've introduced this bill before.

In Canada, Mr. Speaker, including Ontario, it is possible to be denied a job or insurance because of the genetic characteristics of your parents. Therefore, this bill would call for the amending of the Ontario Human Rights Code to prohibit this practice of denying people insurance and denying people employment because of who their parents were.

1320

PETITIONS

STUDENT SAFETY

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have a petition here that's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas there are no mandatory requirements for teachers and school volunteers to have completed CPR training in Ontario;

"Whereas the primary responsibility for the care and safety of students rests with each school board and its employees;

"Whereas the safety of children in elementary schools in Ontario should be paramount;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To work in conjunction with all Ontario school boards to ensure that adequate CPR training is available to school employees and volunteers."

I agree with the petition, affix my signature and give it to Jacob to bring down.

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas it is absolutely crucial that more is done to provide Ontarians retirement financial security which they can rely on; and

"Whereas the federal government does not provide enough to support an adequate standard of living; and

"Whereas the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan will provide the safe and stable retirement that Ontarians need;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all members of the Ontario assembly support a plan to move forward with an Ontario-made pension retirement plan that will provide a financially secure retirement for Ontarians."

I fully support this petition, affix my signature to it and hand it to page Duha.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. Robert Bailey: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas, in recognition that people are suffering from, in addition to mental illnesses, the sickness of isolation, and to address this more action must be taken, including:

"—significant increase to provincial funding of mental health and addictions (parity with funding of treatment of physical disorders);

"—integrated treatment of addictions (at regular doctors' offices and pharmacies);

"—subsidized integration of people with mental disabilities into the workplace (in cases of and in recognition of less than 100% productivity);

"—disability insurance to not be cut off when people on disability take part-time jobs as a means of gradual reintegration into the workplace;

"—disability insurance to not be cut off when people on disability take university or college courses;

"—integration of psychotherapy under OHIP;

"—a meaningful code of ethics for psychologists that refers to content of talk (e.g. prohibits offensive language);

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to do more to support those dealing with mental illnesses and isolation by taking immediate action on the above points."

I agree with this petition and I will send it to the Clerks with Siena.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Michael Mantha: I have hundreds of signatures here.

"Privatizing Hydro One: Another Wrong Choice.

"Whereas once you privatize hydro, there's no return; and

"We'll lose billions in reliable annual revenues for schools and hospitals; and

"We'll lose our biggest economic asset and control over our energy future; and

"We'll pay higher and higher hydro bills just like what's happened elsewhere;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To stop the sale of Hydro One and make sure Ontario families benefit from owning Hydro One now and for generations to come."

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition and present it to page David to bring down to the Clerks.

LUNG HEALTH

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I have a petition here that's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children;

“Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

“In the Ontario Lung Association report, *Your Lungs, Your Life*, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and that this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

“One in five Ontario schoolchildren has asthma;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To allow for deputations on MPP Kathryn McGarry’s private member’s bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, which establishes a lung health advisory council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues; and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario lung health action plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

“Once debated at committee to expedite Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, through the committee stage and back to the Legislature for third and final reading; and to immediately call for a vote on Bill 41 and to seek royal assent immediately upon its passage.”

I agree with this petition. I’m going to affix my name to it and give it to page Gabriel from my riding of Davenport.

TAXATION

Mr. Bill Walker: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government has indicated they plan on introducing a new carbon tax in 2015; and

“Whereas Ontario taxpayers have already been burdened with a health tax of \$300 to \$900 per person that doesn’t necessarily go into health care, a \$2-billion smart meter program that failed to conserve energy, and households are paying almost \$700 more annually for unaffordable subsidies under the Green Energy Act; and

“Whereas a carbon tax scheme would increase the cost of everyday goods including gasoline and home heating; and

“Whereas the government continues to run unaffordable deficits without a plan to reduce spending while collecting \$30 billion more annually in tax revenues than 11 years ago; and

“Whereas the aforementioned points lead to the conclusion that the government is seeking justification to raise taxes to pay for their excessive spending, without accomplishing any concrete targets;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To abandon the idea of introducing yet another unaffordable and ineffective tax on Ontario families and businesses.”

I fully support it and will send it with page Nuh.

PROTECTION DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT

M. Shafiq Qadri: J’ai une pétition adressée à l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario :

« Élimination des microbilles des produits cosmétiques.

« Attendu que les microbilles sont de petites particules de plastique de moins de 1 mm de diamètre, qui passent à travers nos systèmes de filtration de l’eau et sont présentes dans nos rivières et dans les Grands Lacs;

« Attendu que la présence de ces microbilles dans les Grands Lacs augmente et qu’elles contribuent à la pollution par le plastique de nos lacs et rivières d’eau douce;

« Attendu que la recherche scientifique et les données recueillies jusqu’à présent révèlent que les microbilles qui sont présentes dans notre système d’alimentation en eau stockent des toxines, que des organismes confondent ces microbilles avec des aliments et que ces microbilles peuvent se retrouver dans notre chaîne alimentaire;

« Nous, les soussignés, présentons une pétition à l’Assemblée législative aux fins suivantes :

« Mandater le gouvernement de l’Ontario pour qu’il interdise la création et l’ajout de microbilles aux produits cosmétiques et à tous les autres produits de santé et de beauté connexes et demander au ministère de l’Environnement d’effectuer une étude annuelle des Grands Lacs pour analyser les eaux et déceler la présence de microbilles. »

Je vous l’envoie avec page Jaleelah.

MISSING PERSONS

Ms. Cindy Forster: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario does not have missing persons legislation; and

“Whereas police are not able to conduct a thorough investigation upon receipt of a missing person report where criminal activity is not considered the cause; and

“Whereas this impedes investigators in determining the status and possibly the location of missing persons; and

“Whereas this legislation exists and is effective in other provinces; and

“Whereas negotiating rights to safety that do not violate rights to privacy has been a challenge in establishing missing persons law;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“We ask that the Attorney General’s office work with the office of the privacy commissioner to implement missing persons legislation that grants investigators the opportunity to apply for permissions to access information that will assist in determining the safety or whereabouts of missing persons for whom criminal activity is not considered the cause.”

I support this petition. I’ll send it to you with the page from my riding, Alex Wang.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: “Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

“Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

“Whereas dental decay is the second-most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

“Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentrations; and

1330

“Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the ministries of the government of Ontario adopt the number one recommendation made by the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health in a 2012 report on oral health in Ontario, and amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario.”

I agree with the petition, affix my signature and give it to page Laura to bring down.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mrs. Gila Martow: I have a “Demonstrate Integrity” petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Chief Electoral Officer, Greg Essensa, has completed his investigation in Patricia Sorbara and Gerry Loughheed Jr.’s actions prior to the Sudbury by-election; and

“Whereas Mr. Essensa’s investigation concluded that he is ‘of the opinion that the actions of Gerry Loughheed Jr. and Patricia Sorbara amount to apparent contraventions of subsection 96.1(e) of the Election Act’; and

“Whereas ‘no Chief Electoral Officer of Ontario has ever conducted a regulatory investigation into allegations of bribery’; and

“Whereas no Chief Electoral Officer of Ontario has ever reported an apparent contravention of the home statutes of their office to the Attorney General; and

“Whereas the actions of the staff in Office of the Premier and Liberal insiders have brought dishonour to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To request Premier Wynne demand the temporary resignation of Patricia Sorbara and Gerry Loughheed Jr. until the allegations are resolved.”

Obviously, Gerry Loughheed Jr. has stepped down, so that’s half of it right there.

I’m happy to sign my name and give it to page Anna.

ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: “Action needed for Alzheimer’s patients and their families.”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Alzheimer’s disease is a degenerative brain disease that causes thinking and memory impairment. Alzheimer’s disease is progressive, worsens over time and will eventually lead to death;

“Whereas there are an estimated 208,000 Ontarians diagnosed with Alzheimer’s and related dementia today, and that number is set to increase by 40% in the next 10 years;

“Whereas Alzheimer’s disease creates emotional, social and economic burdens on the family and supports of those suffering with the disease—over 25% of those providing personal supports to survivors of Alzheimer’s disease and related dementia are seniors;

“Whereas the total economic burden of dementia in Ontario is expected to increase by more than \$770 million per year through to 2020; and

“Whereas Ontario’s strategy for Alzheimer’s disease and related dementia has not been revised since the implementation of a five-year strategy in 1999;

“We, the undersigned, call upon the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to immediately review, revise and implement an updated, research-informed, comprehensive strategy to respond to and prepare for the rapidly growing needs of those living with Alzheimer’s disease and related dementia.”

I fully agree. I will sign my name and give it to Krishaj to bring up to the desk.

LUNG HEALTH

Ms. Harinder Malhi: To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children;

“Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

“In the Ontario Lung Association report, *Your Lungs, Your Life*, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and that this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

"One in five Ontario schoolchildren has asthma;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To allow for deputations on MPP Kathryn McGarry's private member's bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, which establishes a lung health advisory council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues; and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario lung health action plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

"Once debated at committee to expedite Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, through the committee stage and back to the Legislature for third and final reading; and to immediately call for a vote on Bill 41 and to seek royal assent immediately upon its passage."

I sign my name to this petition and I give it to page Jacob.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time for petitions is expired.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS ELECTION ADVERTISING TRANSPARENCY ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LA TRANSPARENCE DE LA PUBLICITÉ ÉLECTORALE DES GROUPES D'INTÉRÊT PARTICULIER

Mr. Walker moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 96, An Act to amend the Election Finances Act with respect to third party election advertising / Projet de loi 96, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le financement des élections à l'égard de la publicité électorale de tiers.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Bill Walker: I rise in the House today to open debate on Bill 96, An Act to amend the Election Finances Act with respect to third party election advertising. If you are a voter in Ontario who believes in free speech, a level playing field and an open and transparent political process, I'm confident that you will welcome what you are about to hear.

I'd like to begin today by telling you that I alongside my PC caucus colleagues have a collective desire to see more citizen participation in democracy. We believe that elections must be fair, where everyone gets a fair shot. This is our commitment. But Ontario's election laws offer no such guarantee today. What we see today is that the rules are not working very well.

The principle of fairness is paramount and fundamental to engaging everyone in our democratic process. As such, my party has been raising this issue of fairness for

years. We previously tabled a bill in this House, Bill 101, to provide a guarantee that everyone plays by the same rules, and that anyone, regardless of their financial status, is able to participate on an equal basis.

Even though our proposal fell on deaf ears and was ignored by this government, its principle was supported in the last two reports issued by Ontario's Chief Electoral Officer, Greg Essensa, as one of his top priorities. Now, Mr. Essensa, too, is calling on the government to make elections fairer by capping third-party advertising. I think his findings are important, as they speak to the serious trouble brewing in our election process.

Just look at the evidence from our elections watchdog. In the 2007 election, \$1.8 million was spent on third-party advertising, in 2011, \$6 million; and in our most recent 2014 election, \$8.6 million, a jump of 400% or a tripling since 2007. And none of these expenses include such things as Web-based campaign videos, telephone town halls or demon dialers.

At the same time, voter turnout has been falling steadily too. Ontario used to enjoy a 65% voter turnout, but then, by the 2003 election, a 57% turnout; in the 2007 election, a 52% turnout; and in the 2011 election, a 48% turnout. The 2014 election saw a record high number of spoiled ballots; 31,399 Ontarians declined their votes in the last election, the highest rejection level since 1975. The largest protest votes hit the ridings of Brant, Etobicoke Centre, Kitchener-Waterloo, London West, Mississauga-Erindale, Oak Ridges-Markham, Ottawa South, St. Catharines, Windsor West and Thunder Bay-Atikokan.

These patterns are alarming. In my opinion, it is unacceptable. I could have chosen to sit by and idly complain, or I could step up and try to right the situation. I choose to take action.

I also believe we have a shared responsibility in fixing special interest spending and interference in elections, and re-engaging voters by putting a stop to that old adage of "No matter who you vote for, money always wins." While self-serving political messages are part of our democratic system, the amount of money available to be spent nevertheless has to be capped, so that everyone is on a level playing field, regardless of how deep or not deep their pockets are.

I am a prime example. I was raised in a small village, from a family of very, very modest means. I wanted to serve the people, and I gave up a very good-paying job with a full pension to run in the great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. I did so with much risk, with no guarantees of winning or how long I might be given the privilege of serving as the people's representative. And I did so with the understanding that I had a set amount of money I could spend during a campaign to try to win the seat, and an expectation that anyone who would compete against me would have to play by the same rules.

If I had known a third-party group with virtually no limits and/or accountability or consequence could outspend me, at minimum 10 times, I'm not certain I would be here today. I have a concern that if this situation is not

corrected, it might severely restrict who might run for office in the future. This could have profound consequences for the foundation of our democratic process in the future, not to mention the impact of a party that has basically unfettered opposition or recourse as a result of undue influence of unelected people and resources. Being able to buy your way to office is simply not the Canadian way. If democracy for the people and by the people is to remain functional and true in future, realistic spending limits must be put in place. If not, then the system can and will be skewed by those who have the most money.

1340

In the last election of 2014, the groups with the most money in the bag had the most influence over voters and election outcome. This influence was bought for \$8.6 million, which is the total amount of money that special interest groups spent on partisan advertising during that 41-day writ period. There is no telling how high this influence will fly in the next or future elections when our laws don't enforce caps on third-party spending. We do know that special interest funding will keep going up.

As I mentioned earlier, third-party advertising spending has gone up by 400% since 2007, according to Elections Ontario. This means that unless we limit it, any special interest group, anyone with millions to spend, can and will try to buy an election and make it harder for everyone else to vote with their conscience. Subjecting voters' opinions via an orchestrated, multi-million dollar attack campaign from special interest groups is, frankly, an affront to fair and free elections.

This is precisely why I'm tabling this bill today to amend the Election Finances Act to make sure any special interest group's election advertising is capped at \$150,000 per election cycle, or \$3,000 per riding, to reflect the federal rules and caps in other provinces and to reflect what a candidate is currently able to spend. To make the rules meaningful, I'm proposing that any groups found in contravention be deregistered from the next general election. If there is no consequence, those who wish to influence the outcome will continue to pour money in to ensure victory for their desired candidate or party.

This proposal will ensure everyone plays fair in Ontario elections. As a PC MPP, I acknowledge that the current rules allowed any number of special interest groups to run negative campaigns during the election. It is not my intent to take away their right to participate, but to defend the right of everyone to do so on an even playing field, and for the voting public to expect, and accept, nothing less.

I believe the amendments I'm proposing would protect free speech in Ontario elections, the very essence of our democracy. Most importantly, the proposal is in line with the recommendations from our election watchdog, Mr. Essensa, and what I hear from the general electorate. No one is accepting of an unfair balance in regard to open democracy. It would be my sincere hope that the Liberal government of the day and members of the New Democratic Party agree—and I suggest any reputable third-

party group would not disagree—that an election needs to be open, transparent and fair.

Now, I know the government has mused about reviewing advertising rules, but given last spring's discreet announcement about changes to government advertising rules, I question their motive. Instead of tightening controls on the ability of the government to use public money for what is, in effect, partisan advocacy, this government is taking away the Auditor General's power to vet their ads, which will allow them to use taxpayers' dollars to pay for campaign advertising. Again, there must be accountability or there will be abuse.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock.

Would the deputy House leader and the member from Dufferin—Caledon please take your debate outside. If not, you'll be warned. If I have to carry on, I will do so.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Quiet.

Mr. Bill Walker: In a very perverse way, this is their way of pretending they are doing something to make the system more fair to all, all the while continuing to stack the deck in their own favour. They know that under the system, they are the beneficiaries of an unfair system that disrespects the voter in our democratic process. We shouldn't buy it, because everything in their plan says they are stacking the laws against everybody else and ensuring they continue to be direct beneficiaries of these lax and unfair advertising laws. This will hurt our election process and will contribute to the decline of our democracy.

My challenge and recommendation to the government and the individual members in this Legislature is to embrace the spirit and efforts of Bill 96—that the members, their caucuses and leaders not be afraid of elections with limited third-party spending, but will be honest with the people who elected them and will do the right thing and right a system that provides unfair advantages to them. It is totally—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Barrie, would you come to order. And the member for Kitchener—Conestoga, if you're going to heckle, I would like you to sit in your seat.

Mr. Bill Walker: It is totally self-serving and disrespectful to the people who put their trust in them to say they are changing a system and ensuring fairness when they know full well that is simply not true.

At the end of the day, we all have to look in the mirror and answer to our conscience.

Controlling expenditures does not totally eliminate undue and unfair influence, but letting them run rampant when the government knows there is an imbalance that benefits the individual and the party is simply unethical and unacceptable. It brings dishonour to politics and politicians and to the sacred principle of democracy and the Legislature we are all privileged to serve.

I hope the members of the Liberal government and the NDP will consider the moral imperative this time. Will they put the interests of the people they serve ahead of their own, or the direction of their leadership? Will they show respect for the institution of government and democracy? Will they do the honourable thing and support Bill 96 so Ontario can have more fair elections and free speech stays free?

I urge you to support this bill, and I look forward to hearing from everyone who is going to speak about it. I expect this will be a very spirited and healthy debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thank you to the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound for bringing forward some legislation that will actually let us debate election finance reform.

The bill, essentially, is looking to do some caps. The one cap I find kind of interesting, the \$3,000 in any by-election—if you've ever run any print media ads, during an election period they usually triple or quadruple. This would lead to us actually having to pass legislation that would regulate the media industry to regulate their pricing during periods of elections.

Mr. Bill Walker: Not a bad idea.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Yes. Anyway, this bill was first amended in June 2007 by the Liberals, and it continued to allow for this kind of advertising without any limits, but it did force them to register with Elections Ontario and release their spending details.

If we're going to start putting forward changes like this, I think that instead of doing them one at a time, we should have a more nuanced debate and not just talk about things that may or may not inconvenience us.

The most cited example around third-party advertising is, of course, the Working Families Coalition. It probably is an attack on that particular agency—although there are hundreds of individuals and groups who actually do third-party advertising during campaigns. The Working Families Coalition certainly is known for having been pretty hard on the Conservatives and their former leader in the last election, so that may be part of the reason for this bill.

On the flip side, I just want to remind people of Bill 74. That was a bill that sought to help one singular company, EllisDon, a \$2-billion-a-year company. I remind members that that bill was buried in an omnibus government bill at the time. The government was trying to fast-track it through the Legislature without full scrutiny or debate. It was a scheme between the Liberals and the PCs, at the time. Here we have one company that's an enormous contributor to the economy in Ontario but certainly doesn't need the help of this Legislature to increase their profit margin.

There's a long history of governments using taxpayers' money to promote themselves during periods outside of campaigns and leading up to campaigns. The Harper government is cited as spending \$7.5 million in ads promoting his economic action plan. Mike Harris's

government previously used hard-earned taxpayers' dollars all the time, touting his own policies. Even when it wasn't around legislation that was passed, he touted health care ideas, how to make government smaller and be "less taxing for all of us." But what he didn't tell us at the time was what the government cuts were going to be, how many hospitals beds he was going to close, and how many cities, towns and villages were going to lose their identity through mergers and amalgamations.

On the other side of the House—the Liberal government's paid advertising—similar questions are as important. In this spring's budget, the Liberal government made significant changes to the advertising rules. The legislation, again, was buried in a massive budget bill and was fast-tracked, and the taxpayers, who pay the freight for this advertising, didn't have any say in it.

1350

The Auditor General's office calls these new criteria that were passed "a very narrow and limited definition of what constitutes partisan advertising." I think the government is still doing partisan advertising under this new legislation. The Auditor General said it was actually a fatal blow to the law. It restricts the Auditor General from actually being able to consider factors that they had in the past, like political context, the use of self-congratulatory messages, factual accuracy and an advertisement's criticisms of other political parties. She warned about the government using taxpayer dollars for partisan purposes.

If we're going to be drawing parallels, third parties are individuals or groups who actually spend dollars on advertising, but they're spending their own dollars, unlike governments of the past—the Tories and the Liberals—who have spent taxpayers' dollars for their own interests. We've seen this recently, this summer. The minister of—I can't remember what her title is, but it was with respect to the ORPP. There was tons of advertising: taxpayers' dollars used in a partisan way to advertise the ORPP. If that isn't promoting partisan self-interest, I don't know what is.

Ultimately, New Democrats support a review of the Election Finances Act, but we would like to see a more nuanced and honest conversation about how to get to a fairer place with it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I listened very carefully to the comments from the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound regarding election finances. Quite frankly, this proposed bill flies in the face of democracy. It flies in the face of common sense. It flies in the face of freedom of expression, and I'll tell you why.

Perhaps we're targeting some groups today, but let's say that at the next election the opposition party—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock for a second. When this side of the House had a chance to speak, I tried my best to control that side of the House. I would ask the same.

Carry on.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I was just saying this flies in the face of freedom of expression. Perhaps by coincidence, we're dealing right now with a bill that's called anti-SLAPP legislation. It's a bill to prevent strategic lawsuits against public participation. In other words, if someone wants to speak out against a development or something going on out there—against someone who has deep pockets—what happens sometimes is that you speak out against it and that company decides to sue the person complaining: "You are trying to slander me. I'm going to sue you for \$2 million or \$3 million." We went through that whole exercise recently, and what we saw was that there were people out there who suffer from this, and we're correcting that.

Again, I think what this member is trying to do would be the opposite: to create SLAPP legislation. Right now, we're trying to limit the expenses of a third party. But imagine, next election, if a group comes out and is, let's say, opposed to the changes in the sex education curriculum. They'll be subject to limits, too, or any other group that wants to come out. Let's say the Leader of the Opposition campaigns, and there's another group that has the same position as the leader regarding the changes in the sex education curriculum. You're going to be limiting them as well.

The other thing, too, is that in an open democracy, we try to promote expression. We try to allow as much expression as possible from any source. We don't know: There could be another third party somewhere else that wants to get involved in the campaign and wants to advertise in the campaign. Should we shut them up too and say, "You can only spend so much money"?

Here, we're talking about one particular group that the member is basically trying to target today, but there are all sorts of other groups out there too that may want to speak in the future. It could be any group that wants to say something, and they would be limited to only spending a certain amount of money.

I think this bill is really dangerous, in the fact that it limits third parties from getting involved in the democratic process, in advertising. As mentioned as well earlier from the previous member that just spoke, there may be other groups that want to get out there and speak, and to limit them to a certain financial amount is not really the right thing to do.

Our party, the government, introduced or announced in June and in the 2015 budget that we'll be strengthening Ontario's rules on third-party advertising. We have committed to addressing the recommendations from the Chief Electoral Officer's report on the 2014 general election. We will be moving ahead with these additional items. So it's not buried away in some budget document; we are proceeding and we are committed to make the necessary changes regarding third-party advertising.

We have rules in place already in the Election Finances Act which control third parties and make them register how much they spent and report that to the Chief Electoral Officer. We have stuff in place that will work. In my opinion, I think that this goes much too far the

opposite way and creates an obstacle to freedom of expression and to allow people or groups to express their point of view. There could be many other ones out there that want to come out and speak on a certain matter.

We're all trying to enhance the integrity of the election finance system while at the same time protecting the public interest. What we can't do is implement changes or restrictions that prevent people from speaking up as they choose. I think that captures a wider range of advertising than any definition that captures issue advertising elsewhere in Canada.

Instead of regulating advertising that takes a position on an issue with a registered partner candidate, as has been the norm in other Canadian jurisdictions, this would mean that any advertising on any issue which the House is seized with would be regulated. I cannot stress enough how that would affect future groups that may want to get involved. Three years down the line, another group may come out and decide, "We want to spend so much money on a particular issue that's of concern to us." They may want to criticize us. They may want to compliment us, the government. They may want to compliment the opposition or they may want to compliment the third party, and say, "We're going to support the position that's taken by the opposition. We want them to get elected so we're going to advertise on their behalf."

So I think we need to take a really sober look at this whole issue because it's quite important to allow people, groups or organizations to speak at will in this province and across Canada.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate. The leader of the opposition.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity to speak before the Legislature today on this excellent bill put forward by the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. First, let me commend the member for all his hard work. We are so lucky that you've put so much energy into this excellent bill.

This bill is being introduced to ensure that collusion between special interest groups and political parties does not occur while engaging in third-party advertising during the writ period.

The Chief Electoral Officer's 2012-13 annual report from Elections Ontario called on the Legislature for changes to third-party advertising. In the report, Greg Essensa suggested that imposing caps on third-party spending be considered, noting that Ontario's election laws—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The deputy House leader, come to order. And the member for Dufferin-Caledon, if you would not respond, it will help me.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the report, Greg Essensa suggested that imposing caps on third-party spending be considered, noting that Ontario election laws do not specifically ban collusion between political parties and third parties.

No member in the House can feel that that's appropriate, and we should all hear the words of Greg Essensa.

He said that “rules regarding third-party advertising should be considered to align Ontario with the best practices in other provinces.”

Quebec, British Columbia, Alberta, New Brunswick and the federal government all have adopted controls over third-party advertising. Why is Ontario the laggard in this respect? They understand that representatives are elected to serve their constituents and their larger province or country, not to serve special interests. They also understand that elections should be decided on which ideas have the most merit, not if they offend special interests.

1400

Between 2007 and 2011, the amount spent by special interest groups on advertising tripled to \$6.7 million. By 2014, the amount jumped to \$8.6 million, a 400% increase from 2007. This leaves the door open for collusion and backroom dealings between the Liberal government and special interests.

I know members of the government will understand that, if they want to clear the air, if they want to make sure no one raises allegations that there is collusion with special interests, they will do the right thing, they will do the honourable thing and support the notion that this excellent bill puts forward.

There are a number of third-party groups that have spent money on advertising. The stats speak for themselves: In the 2014 campaign, by our calculations, 28 groups in total spent money on third-party advertising. If you take out the groups that spent less than \$100,000—this is not small special interest groups—of the \$8-million-plus spent, roughly 94% was spent by nine groups alone. How is that right? How is that appropriate, to diminish our democracy?

The Liberals voted against transparency in 2011 when the member for Wellington—Halton Hills put forward a bill to limit third-party collusion. They also voted against transparency when the member for Chatham—Kent—Essex put forward a similar proposal in 2013.

The government already plays fast and loose with the rules when it comes to taxpayer-funded government ads. The Auditor General recently complained that the new rules for the review of government ads have huge holes and huge loopholes that would leave the system available to be abused. We share her concerns.

The problem with third-party advertising is spiralling out of control. It is an affront to our political system; it is an affront to our democracy. My colleague's bill is a necessary step in the right direction. The spirit of the bill is about fairness. How can you vote against fairness? How can you vote against transparency? How can you vote to give special interests an advantage over your constituents? This is about our democracy. This is about what is right.

So I encourage all members of the Legislature not to do what may be convenient for political purposes, but to do what is right for Ontario, do what is right to stand up and protect our democracy: Support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It is always an honour to stand in this place and engage in debate.

I want to commend the member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound for bringing this bill forward. As far as we're concerned, it's time to review the act. We want to look at it in all aspects. There's nothing wrong with that.

I was interested to hear the leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition speak about democracy because I couldn't help—one can't help, occasionally, being a little cynical in this place. But, if I think about democracy, I think about things like Harper's—and by the way, Mr. Trudeau voted with him—Bill C-51, which limited all of our civil liberties and all of our democracy. So, when I think about democracy, I can't help but think about issues like that.

There is no question that—many members, the member from Scarborough Southwest talked about this too—money talks. It does talk. It talks in politics. There is no question about it. But, I think, what is most egregious, in terms of money talking, is when governments use taxpayers' dollars to do their own talking for their own partisan interests. I think we've had ample expressions of that from both the party to my right, literally and figuratively, and the party across the aisle. Certainly, we've seen Mr. Harper—the member from Welland talked about it—\$7.5 million touting the economic—what was it called—

Interjection.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: —the Economic Action Plan; thank you—this before it was even passed, before it was even passed in the federal Legislature, touting it as if it were law and government policy.

Certainly we've seen from the party across the aisle, from the government, Metrolinx—hardly an arm's-length agency. Metrolinx—much hated, by the way, by anybody who lives along the tracks—spent \$17 million. They outdid Mr. Harper. They outdid the Prime Minister: \$17 million simply touting something that was happening anyway, supposedly government policy—selling it, in effect, selling it in Liberal self-interest, because, quite frankly, it's not in the interest of anybody in Toronto, certainly not in my riding. In fact, they're listening to those bells every 15 minutes all night long. It's keeping them awake, it's keeping people with health problems up, and for what? The UP Express has, like, two people in a car travelling to the airport and back. We're paying for that, all of us, and taxpayers are paying to be annoyed, to have their health put at risk, not to have a relief line, not be able to travel, because it is too expensive. And by the way, business travellers can't travel on it either because they would be insane to, because business travellers get to write off their cab expenses. And by the way, we won't get into Uber, but Uber's even cheaper. So this is a total white elephant that's running up and down the tracks, and it took \$17 million for the government to tell us how wonderful it all is.

What else?

The member from Welland was absolutely right. I immediately went to the EllisDon bill. Look at that. That

was passed in about two weeks. EllisDon, one of the biggest companies in Canada, got their way through legislation in about two weeks. Wow. Money talks. Yes, it does. Certainly it does. And certainly it does where politicians are concerned.

If we look at what our Liberal friends across the aisle have done for the insurance industry, for example, oh, my goodness, does money talk there. Wasn't there a promise somewhere back then to lower auto insurance rates by 15%? I think we negotiated that. It never really happened. But guess what? Insurance rates have gone up, and guess what? Payouts for those victims in accidents have gone way down.

Interjection.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Yes. In homage to Rosie, yes. Absolutely, Liberals and Conservatives got together on that one.

Yes, money talks, sadly. I would go even further. When he was talking about special interest groups, I couldn't help but think about the National Citizens Coalition. If there ever was a Conservative special interest group, it's that. And they carry ads, don't they? I remember their ads. The Fraser Institute, C.D. Howe—by the way, interesting collusion again: In Toronto Centre we have somebody who was a chair of the C.D. Howe running for the Liberals. Wow. Who knew? Conservatives and Liberals again. Again, money talking, money talking in a third-person context.

Absolutely, New Democrats want to see democracy. And by the way, talking about democracy, wouldn't it be great if we had proportional representation? Wouldn't that be good? Because then our votes would actually count. I would say to my friends to the right here that in my riding—where, sadly, Conservatives don't stand a chance; their votes are all wasted—your votes would count in my riding if we had proportional representation. Ditto in other ridings for the Liberals or New Democrats, or the Green Party, for that matter, as the case may be.

Again, there are lots of ways of making our system more democratic. There are lots of ways of bringing this system to a more level playing ground. There are lots of ways of doing that. This is perhaps a start. We're going to let it pass. We think it should go to committee and we think we should have this fulsome discussion about how money talks and how it shouldn't. Or perhaps we should quiet its voice down a little bit, especially with our wealthy friends out there.

Oh, and by the way—last words—today the Premier was standing there with Justin Trudeau and the transportation minister, right there, the Premier of Ontario talking about how wonderful Liberals are. She is not only the Liberal Premier of Ontario; she is the Premier for everyone. If we want to talk about democracy, Mr. Speaker, let's talk about that: how, when you are elected, you don't just represent the people who voted for you from your own party; you represent everybody in your constituency—everybody, those who didn't vote for you either. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Arthur Potts: If I could take this opportunity to bring a little baseball analogy, I guess I get the opportunity to be cleanup for our party on this side of the House.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: You're going to need a big shovel.

1410

Mr. Arthur Potts: A big show? I've got the member from Scarborough Southwest, who hit a pretty solid double, I'd say. It's my opportunity to bring him home, and I'll be following right behind him.

I am delighted for this opportunity to speak to the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound's motion today, An Act to amend the Election Finances Act with respect to third party election advertising.

On its face, it's a good start; it gets us going in the right direction because it purports to do exactly what we're already doing with the Election Finances Act: not allow candidates, parties, riding associations, to hide and shield their expenditures during the course of an election campaign behind third-party advertising. We already have rules governing that within the place and it may be, as the member for Scarborough Southwest indicated, that there is a review. It was announced in our last budget. We are going to take a look at whether some of those aspects of third-party advertising need to be strengthened.

These safeguards do currently exist. They may need to be bumped up. Everyone who's spending in advertising is a third party. If they're spending more than \$500, they have to register, and there's your transparency and accountability. We know who they are because they registered. If they spend more than \$5,000, their statements have to be audited back. We have a good sense of where they're spending and how they're spending.

These rules are in place, but I do appreciate the member bringing this forward because it does help us start this discussion on what other measures need to be in place. But I am a little concerned with the way he has approached it in this bill. I mean, this whole notion under section 37.1, issue advertising—it starts to very much narrow the scope and get down to prohibitions against public participation, which I would find quite difficult to support.

I just came from justice committee earlier today where we did clause-by-clause of the SLAPP bill, and you know what SLAPP is all about? It's there in order to protect against big bully groups silencing people, silencing public discussion and public participation through the threats of lawsuits etc.

What I see this bill is an opportunity—for a party to slap down public participation in meaningful debates, because it goes at the issues. What I've seen in my experience and a lot of work in the municipal election areas were community groups that come up—dog walkers of X park are looking for a leash-free zone, or a community organization with their issue being a development. They will get out and they will advocate against that. In my experience, their advocacy tends not to be in favour of any one party.

When we see in the act, it talks—it's always doing it "on behalf of." It gets to the Leader of the Opposition's comments, which I think, when taken, are a little ill-advised, to be accusing people of collusion. Collusion is fraudulent and the act would get to that—go ahead; prove it. Under the bill that currently exists, if someone is spending that money "on behalf of," it's included as an election expense. It's taken very seriously and it's the kind of thing that we've seen from members from the party opposite. They've been thrown out of office in Peterborough for overspending, when they start to include all the things that were done on their behalf.

This is very important: that our act currently gets at the collusion acts. For him to be throwing on accusations—particularly, Mr. Speaker, as you know, that as an MP, the Leader of the Opposition was solidly endorsed by the Campaign Life Coalition, a huge-spending organization with a very specific issue. Now, it's okay in Ottawa to take that kind of an endorsement, that kind of activity, to have them buy memberships on your behalf, but it's not okay in Ontario. You are seeing a bit of the transformation of the Leader of the Opposition when he's understanding what real politics are like in Ontario.

We also had the example that he was fully endorsed by the Ontario Landowners Association—

Interjection: Oh, wow.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Right, exactly—also selling memberships on his behalf.

I welcome the public participation of the groups that the member opposite, the Leader of the Opposition, was stirring up in this community about the physical health education program because, through the kind of discussions that they were encouraging, which we were 100% satisfied were actually reading the act as it was or the new guidelines as they were—but people got involved. For us to be thinking about silencing those whole communities by putting the onerous requirements of excessive legal and accounting and registration matters—you've got to hire a lawyer now in order to stand up in your community and say, "I don't like what this guy has done."

What I have always experienced is that third-party advertising, which is important, is never about "on behalf of"; it's "in opposition to." It's not endorsing one particular point of view or another; it's saying, "We don't like when this has happened." You get that thing which we see now happening federally: the Anyone but Harper campaign. That's what third-party advertising does. It's not saying, "We're going to vote this party or that." It's saying, "We don't want the one that's there." That's been the direction of focused third-party advertising.

To the extent that you want to silence debate, I think we need to be very careful. In an era where people are not coming out to vote like they used to, with declining participation rates, particularly amongst young people, we want to be out there encouraging and not having this constant threat of the big stick coming down with a huge fine if you get out there and exercise your democratic right. So I think I'll have to vote against this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Harris: First off, that is unfortunate. However, I do appreciate the chance to comment on this act because I will be voting in favour of An Act to amend the Election Finances Act with respect to third party election advertising, brought forward by, of course, my colleague from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, as it is a very important issue—the concept of fair and democratic elections—that is our responsibility to uphold as MPPs.

As we've heard, this bill amends the Election Finances Act, expanding the definition of third-party election advertising to include issue advertising or advertising designed to take a position on any provincial legislative issue. It proposes to impose a \$150,000 cap in general elections and \$3,000 in relation to a by-election, with penalties set at five times the full amount of the expenses incurred.

Speaker, we in this House all know that the issue of third-party advertising has been a concern, not only for us as the official opposition, but also for Ontario's Chief Electoral Officer. Elections Ontario's 2012-13 annual report called for legislative changes to third-party advertising laws and saw Greg Essensa suggest consideration of caps on third-party spending. It's that call that the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound is helping to answer today.

It's an answer that is in the best interests of all Ontarians to support, as when we allow any political party to join with third parties in a "You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours" relationship, it's the taxpayers who end up getting gouged in the end. We've heard the numbers and they are concerning. Between 2007 and 2011, the amount spent by special interest groups on advertising tripled to \$6.7 million, and by 2014 that amount jumped to \$8.6 million—money that is used to blur the lines and create uneven playing fields for what are supposed to be fair and democratic elections.

Speaker, closer to my home, I think of the September 2012 Ontario by-election, when third-party interest groups spent nearly \$1 million on advertising—almost four times more than the political party which eventually emerged victorious in Kitchener-Waterloo. These groups included well-known unions like the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, which spent \$846,000, according to returns filed with Elections Ontario in April.

The fact is that third parties could have spent a virtually unlimited amount of money during by-elections or any other campaign because Ontario's election laws do nothing to restrict interest groups in the same way as they restrict spending by political parties and candidates. This advantage deep-pocketed groups with political opinions and runs counter to democratic principles of fairness. We see that to the south, in essence, using Super PACs, America's independent political action committees, which can spend an unlimited amount of money, so long as they do not donate to a political candidate.

Again, Speaker, the concern remains that when we have Super PAC-like groups forming to promote one

candidate or one party over another, it unfairly tilts the playing field, creating political advantages that, as far as I have been taught, are not the Ontario way.

I know my colleague from Nipissing will finish up our last three minutes. I just really believe we all need to support the fair and equitable principles reflected in today's private member's bill to limit spending on third-party advertising.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Nipissing, further debate.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I, too, am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Bill 96, an excellent bill from our member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Speaker, you've heard this already: The Chief Electoral Officer's 2012-13 annual report was clear in calling for legislative changes to third-party advertising laws. He was very clear. Our leader, Patrick Brown, gave you the details from Greg Essensa a few minutes ago, so let's move on then to some new topics.

Let's hear what the Toronto Star's Martin Regg Cohn had to say about the issue and what he calls a "growing threat to Ontario's democracy." Martin said, "The national ban on big money politics showcases the best of democracy for all Canadians—except Ontarians.

"Thanks to Kathleen Wynne"—I'm quoting from the Toronto Star—"Ontario will still be the Wild West of campaign financing rules when the next provincial election takes place....

"Our Premier could learn a thing or two about democracy from our Prime Minister," Stephen Harper.

1420

Interjections.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Martin Regg Cohn's comment. That's exactly what Martin said.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: "Which way will Ontario go? How much longer will" Premier "Wynne hide behind the fig leaf of 'transparency,' while fundraising and negative advertising undermine our democracy?"

I couldn't agree with Martin from the Star any more.

But there's something you need to hear, Speaker, and it's more about what the Liberal government thinks when they pulled this in the last budget: They put into the budget massive changes to government advertising. So shocking were these changes that the Auditor General came out with a special report, and here are some of the details.

They changed the class of advertising messages the government is allowed to convey. The auditor told us these amendments allow the government to make changes and remove the discretion of the Auditor General. From the Auditor General: "We disagree with this amendment."

There's another one about whether ads meet the standards "in his or her opinion." The auditor said, "The discretion of" the auditor "is removed," and, "We disagree with this amendment."

She narrowed the definition of partisan advertising. The auditor told us, "New definition of 'partisan' in the GAA removes any discretionary authority that the Auditor General and her panel of experts exercise in approving or rejecting advertising. We disagree with this amendment."

The member's title to be used in the government advertising was snuck in by this government. The auditor told us, "This change limits our authority to determine the appropriateness" of an ad with terms such as the use of the word Premier. "We disagree with this amendment."

Finally, the auditor told us about "advertising during an election period is not permitted." This is what was snuck in, in the last budget. The auditor said, "This change removes the Auditor General's discretion and empowers the government to run any ad it chooses during an election period," and the Auditor General of our province disagrees with this amendment.

It's time for Ontario to respect democracy, level the playing field and support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. You have two minutes for a response.

Mr. Bill Walker: I want to thank each member for taking part in today's debate. It truly was a spirited debate, and that's what it should be.

I want to bring up one point. The member for Scarborough Southwest characterized this bill, in his word, as "dangerous." I find this disappointing and, frankly, hypocritical. This member was praising Mr. Essensa's recommendations as "excellent" in Hansard, September 28, 2015, so I'm confused as to why, two weeks later—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'd ask you to withdraw.

Mr. Bill Walker: Withdraw.

I'm confused as to why, two weeks later, when given the opportunity to put them in place, he finds them dangerous.

I think we owe it to the Ontario public to have this debate, to voice why we believe voting is important and how we want to reverse the voter apathy trend and re-engage Ontarians in the process. I also believe it is incumbent on all of us to challenge the status quo. In my opinion, the status quo can also have a significant impact in regard to who is willing to run for office and the type of candidates any party might get in future.

I'm very concerned about how any of us are able to compete fairly when political candidates have very definite caps and special interest groups do not. This could very well impact you, if not today, perhaps in a future campaign should the loyalties of special interest groups change—and we know these interests do change.

I want to reiterate that Bill 96 will put Ontario's election laws on common ground with the rest of our country by making sure election advertising is capped at \$150,000 per election cycle, to reflect the federal rules and caps in other provinces. Some members question the cap amount, and I just want to remind them that it's

indexed to inflation. Most importantly, the cap is in line with the rest of the country, if even more generous.

I believe the amendments I'm proposing, which are in line with the recommendations from election watchdog Mr. Greg Essensa are fair and will protect free speech in Ontario elections, the very essence of our democracy, and re-engage voters. It's about people like the pages, whom I want to thank for their service here, to ensure that the people watching at home, if they were able to judge today, would be able to better judge where each one of us here stands with regard to free, fair and transparent elections. I hope they'll hear your message that you too reject the lax election spending rules, and that you will use your vote today to change that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll take the vote on that item at the end of private members' public business.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

FINANCEMENT DES INFRASTRUCTURES

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government should guarantee that government-held ridings and opposition-held ridings be given equal and transparent consideration on infrastructure funding, and that when funding decisions are made, should guarantee that all MPPs, whether in government or opposition, be given fair and equal advance notice of the official announcement.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Pettapiece has moved private member's notice of motion number 53. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation. The member for Perth-Wellington.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Thank you, Speaker. Since I was elected in 2011, I have made it my priority to speak for the municipalities I represent. Having served as a municipal councillor, I know that municipalities need to build, maintain and manage their infrastructure. They know what they need and when they need it. They know they are accountable to their residents. They expect the province to be a partner. They know that provincial dollars are limited, but they expect them to be invested fairly. They expect a transparent process, one that respects their staff time and their budget. Finally, they expect the process to be untainted by politics because no riding, no municipality and no taxpayer should ever be punished for their voting history or the political stripe of their MPP. These principles underpin my resolution. They should not be controversial, and that's why I'm asking for all-party support.

It's regrettable, Mr. Speaker, that this debate is even necessary. It's necessary because municipalities' expectations of fairness are too often not being met. In my time today I will show examples. I will also mention some feedback that this resolution has received. No doubt the government will say, "We've invested so many dollars in

Perth-Wellington and so many dollars in other opposition ridings. Doesn't that show our generosity?" It will do no such thing. What matters is how people actually perceive this government and the way it operates when it comes to infrastructure and how it interacts with municipalities.

In opposition, we can't control the way they operate. All I can do is speak for the people I represent, making sure the government knows our needs and priorities. I've always sought to do so in a spirit of co-operation, working across the aisle because, at the end of the day, my constituents expect to see results.

That's why, on the day after the last election, I wrote to Premier Wynne saying, "I want to work with you on the priorities that matter to the people of Perth-Wellington. I intend to be constructive but persistent in speaking up for them."

I went on to identify some of the issues around our riding, including infrastructure, but this government rarely responds in kind. It rarely responds with constructive action. It rarely responds in a spirit of non-partisanship, and it's a problem not unique to my riding.

Just look next door at Huron-Bruce, a riding well represented by Lisa Thompson. Look at the Liberals' decision to scrap the Kincardine hospital redevelopment. It's obvious that it was needed and the government agreed when they approved it, but then they backed away when the former Liberal MPP was defeated and the electoral advantage of the project disappeared.

Our leader, Patrick Brown, called it a "scandal of political partisanship and opportunism," and he's right. That's why my resolution stresses the need for equal and transparent consideration in funding decisions. They promise billions for new infrastructure in Liberal ridings, even as they changed or scrapped the programs we rely on in rural Ontario, all without consultation.

They're selling off Hydro One, primarily affecting opposition ridings, to finance their expensive promises to their own ridings—again without consultation.

Their funding priorities seem to change depending on where you live. The Waterloo region LRT is partially funded, while Hamilton's LRT is fully funded. They scrapped the Connecting Link Program, which they finally promised to bring back, but with little details and at a fraction of what it used to be.

OMPF funding is another example affecting nearly every municipality I represent. They're squeezing municipalities; with no consultation, based on inaccurate information. They do it because they can get away with it. After all, we're just opposition ridings.

1430

I also want to address the theme of transparency in this resolution. Here's what Gary McNamara, the president of AMO, had to say: "Getting infrastructure funding is as unpredictable as winning the lottery. The status quo is not acceptable. We need a new arrangement."

I want to recount an experience from the county of Wellington, which I represent. In January, the government asked the county why they didn't apply to the Small

Communities Fund. Their response reads in part, "Wellington county has provided an expression of interest to the province on three prior application processes ... and were not successful in passing the initial 'screening' test."

It continues: "Putting together these applications requires significant staff resources. If our economic conditions and fiscal situation are going to preclude the county from being successful in future grant applications, we would appreciate the province letting us know this up front so that we can avoid wasting future staff resources and scarce municipal tax dollars in a fruitless fishing expedition in which we very well know that our chances for success are minuscule at best."

We hear this time and time again. The government sets up an infrastructure program severely, perhaps deliberately, lacking transparency. They compel municipal staff to waste countless hours jumping through hoops to apply for funding.

Other municipalities have resorted to hiring professional consulting firms. These are small municipalities that don't have tens of thousands of dollars to spend on consultants to fill out forms for funding they will probably never see. Others have even suggested hiring lobbyists to get their government's attention.

For years, we've told the government to fix the process. They haven't done it. Instead, they play partisan games.

In March, for instance, the Deputy Premier came to Perth-Wellington to meet with the mayors in our riding. Understandably, they wanted to discuss infrastructure. They wanted to know why the Liberals cancelled the Connecting Link Program, something the Deputy Premier apparently knew nothing about. They wanted to know why the province was starving them of OMPF funding without the promised offsets.

Who organized and attended these meetings? Not the Deputy Premier's staff—that job went to the unelected, former Liberal candidate, to whom the Minister of Agriculture must have given the day off.

I later wrote to the Deputy Premier to reiterate the municipalities' concerns, which I have been raising for a very long time. Of course, the Deputy Premier didn't respond. But here's the worst part: When the media asked the Deputy Premier about her meeting with the mayors, she said, "I just wanted to connect with them and hear what is top of mind for advice for the province. They had a lot of advice," she chuckled. "We had a really good meeting," she went on to say, and, "If John [Wilkinson] was still MPP here he would have a chance to have meetings like that."

I spoke to participants, and they couldn't believe it. They were also surprised that she would invite the unelected Liberal candidate to the meeting, but not the elected MPP. When the Deputy Premier, with the former candidate, on the taxpayers' dime, meets with elected mayors to discuss infrastructure, and when she says, in effect, that she would include a Liberal MPP but ignore an opposition MPP, she reveals her government's true attitude. She confirms every suspicion that this govern-

ment is playing partisan games with infrastructure. She confirms that this government is treating public money as Liberal money. She confirms that this government would be so partisan, they would actually punish municipalities in opposition ridings. That is shameful, Mr. Speaker, absolutely shameful.

I want to move on to the final part of my resolution, that all MPPs be given fair and equal advance notice of funding announcements. This isn't happening. Instead, the Liberals from nearby ridings are traipsing into opposition ridings to announce funding. In August, the member for Cambridge, PA to the Minister of Transportation, announced social service funding for my riding. The news release came not from the ministry, but from the constituency office in Cambridge. The office of the Minister of Community and Social Services told us, "We just give a bit of a heads-up to our members to share the good news."

In November of last year, the government didn't even use an MPP. They went straight back to their unelected former Liberal candidate to announce public money. They were content to have the elected MPPs read about it in the paper.

In Simcoe-Grey, the member was told he could not speak at an infrastructure announcement in his own riding. Instead, they sent a Liberal to take credit. Games like these reinforce the perception—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): If the member from Barrie can't stop, I will have to warn you.

Carry on.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: In Simcoe-Grey, the member was told he could not speak at an infrastructure announcement in his own riding. Instead, they sent a Liberal to take credit. Games like these reinforce the perception—many believe the reality—that opposition ridings are unfairly disadvantaged.

I want to move on to the feedback we have received on this motion. It comes from organizations like the Ontario Good Roads Association. It comes from the 115 municipalities, and counting, that endorse this resolution. They are from PC, NDP and even Liberal ridings.

Essex County Warden Tom Bain was quoted: "It appears now that funding is going to some areas ... and others are getting very little funding."

Elgin county's resolution states, "It is crucial that applications be evaluated based on merit and not on the political affiliation of a riding's MPP."

In Perth-Wellington, this resolution enjoys support from the county of Perth, the city of Stratford, the township of Perth East, the township of North Perth, the town of St. Marys, the township of Mapleton and the township of Wellington North.

The town of St. Marys' resolution states: "That the council for the town of St. Marys expects southwestern Ontario to receive its fair and non-partisan share of the Moving Ontario Forward infrastructure investment...."

Mayor Walter McKenzie of West Perth wrote to me about infrastructure criteria that penalizes agricultural communities and those that demonstrate sound fiscal

management: "The assumption that agriculturally based municipalities are more well off financially based on limited economic indicators is a myth...." I appreciate the mayor's comments.

It's encouraging that so many mayors have gone on record to support this resolution. What's interesting is what people are saying off the record. One mayor, who asked to remain unnamed, said this: "I fully support your efforts and agree a per capita formula is more transparent and avoids the politics of government versus opposition members."

Another municipal representative said this: "I hope you'll understand that we do have a few things ongoing with the province and don't want to jeopardize this dialogue at the present time." It's a real shame that any municipal councillor, standing up for their constituents, would feel constrained from speaking publicly about this matter.

To conclude, Mr. Speaker, this resolution is a first step to correct perception, often the reality, that this government is punishing opposition ridings for voters' democratic choices.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'm honoured to stand in this House on behalf of my constituents in Windsor–Tecumseh and support this motion put forward by my good friend from Perth–Wellington, Mr. Pettapiece. I've taken the opportunity to discuss the motion with Mr. Pettapiece, and he's given me some of the background that led to this. I understand where he's coming from.

I recall the results of the last election. The Liberals held the one seat in London but were shut out in the rest of southwestern Ontario. It was a stunning defeat. The cabinet minister who represented Windsor West lost to Ms. Gretzky of the NDP. Within hours, the media asked the Premier what that would mean for the good people in Windsor and Essex county. The Premier didn't bat an eye. She said that she wouldn't forget about Windsor. She said that she wouldn't forget about any part of Ontario where the Liberals no longer held a seat. She said that she was going to be the Premier for all of Ontario, not just for those ridings where the Liberals manage to get elected or re-elected.

Let's look at the wording in this motion. The member for Perth–Wellington—by the way, Speaker, Mr. Pettapiece's roots run deep in Essex county; I think he's related to half the people I know in the town of Kingsville—Mr. Pettapiece says: "That, in the opinion of this House, the government should guarantee that government-held ridings and opposition-held ridings be given equal and transparent consideration on infrastructure funding, and that when funding decisions are made," and an announcement is planned within the riding, the government "should guarantee that all MPPs, whether in government or opposition, be given fair and equal notice of the official announcement."

1440

The way I read the second part of the motion is that if a minister or parliamentary assistant is coming into an

opposition-held riding to make a funding announcement, the opposition member holding that riding be given ample notice of the time and place of the announcement. Speaker, as a further courtesy, the opposition member would actually be invited to attend the ceremony or event when the announcement is being made. That's pretty straightforward—at least to me.

How many times have we, in this chamber, heard the Premier, her cabinet colleagues and the other members of the party say, "We are open and transparent in all that we do"? I would suggest that if you are open and transparent, or wish to be perceived as being open and transparent, then you have no choice but to vote in favour of this motion put forward by the good member from Perth–Wellington.

Let me turn my attention now to the first part of the motion, "equal and transparent consideration on infrastructure funding." In my part of the province, in the county of Essex and the city of Windsor, the perception remains that we're not getting our fair share when it comes to the recent distribution of infrastructure funding. I'm not talking about the massive highway project that is nearing completion, leading to a proposed new international border crossing; I'm speaking of the requests that have gone in for funding assistance on smaller projects: an ultra-high-speed fibre optics network, better highway connections, expansion work on bridges, funding for an approved transit system, investments in social housing and the like.

The president of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, my friend Gary McNamara, is also the mayor of Tecumseh. He runs a tight ship, but believes his local community is being penalized for keeping its books in good shape while government grants are going to places where they're not as good at balancing the books. AMO has long called for predictable and sustainable funding on a per capita basis.

The mayor of LaSalle, my friend Ken Antaya, feels the same way. LaSalle, which is in Mr. Natyshak's riding of Essex, has applied for 11 infrastructure grants in the past three years and has received only one.

The Essex county warden, my friend Tom Bain, is also the mayor of Lakeshore, which is also in the riding of Essex. The county recently passed a unanimous motion of support for a more equitable system of distributing infrastructure funding from the government. They said it would be done in a fair and non-partisan way. They agreed with the member from Perth–Wellington—equal and transparent funding. Is that too much to ask for?

Speaker, you know as well as I and the rest of us that when it comes to money collected for tax purposes in Ontario from all three orders of government, municipal taxes account for just 9% of the total. The province and the feds get the lion's share of the tax money that comes out of your pocket. You may be surprised to know, as will the Toronto-centric members, I'm sure, that of the 444 municipalities in Ontario, half of them have to raise taxes if they need as little as \$50,000 for an infrastructure

project. Our smaller municipalities need financial help from the senior orders of government when it comes to infrastructure. Governments shouldn't be playing favourites.

There's no excuse for not inviting the local member to attend a funding announcement in that member's riding. That should be a recognized courtesy. It shouldn't be left up to the minister's discretion or the aide of a parliamentary assistant. That's petty politics. That's not open and transparent politics. That's a slap in the face to the voters in this province who made a democratic choice at the ballot box and chose someone other than the candidate put forward by the party currently in power. Such direction shouldn't be allowed. The Premier should send out a directive saying it won't be tolerated, saying that all 107 members in this House deserve the same respect and all 107 ridings deserve equal consideration for infrastructure spending.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Han Dong: I'm very pleased to say something on this bill. I have to thank the member from Perth-Wellington for putting this motion forward. I agree with him. I don't think it's necessary. You would think that this is done, and it is done, by the government.

I'm pleased to hear the members across the floor agreeing on the importance of infrastructure investment because, on this side, we've been talking about that since last year, and recently we haven't heard much support on the other side.

I share his passion, the intention and motivation for speaking up for his right. I'm doing the same thing. I want more infrastructure investment in my riding of Trinity-Spadina as well. You know, we have all these condo owners, and every morning they have to struggle to get on the streetcar to go to work. They have to wait for five streetcars to go by before they can get on one. We have these issues in the downtown core as well. So I completely share his intention, why it is so important for infrastructure investment taking place in his hometown.

But I disagree with this motion because it implies that our government has not been investing according to the people's needs. This motion is implying that there are some politics involved in the distribution of public funds. I think this motion would probably be better served at a federal level, in the House of Commons, because we've seen for the past few years—for the past 10 years, I should say—where the federal government has distributed their funds. Certainly it is not coming to Ontario. We have a fairness issue. We have a shortage of federal money here in Ontario when it comes to infrastructure investment. So I share the intention and I just feel it's not equal when it comes to provincial versus federal intention to invest in infrastructure.

I would also like to point out that when the Premier goes out talking about infrastructure investment on transportation, you know, she talks about \$16 billion invested in the GTHA, the greater Toronto and Hamilton area, and \$15 billion outside of the GTHA, for the very

reason that we want to make sure the investment for our infrastructure in Ontario is kept in a fair manner when it comes to an urban and suburban setting versus a rural setting. I notice that every time the Premier talks about infrastructure investment and every time she talks about transit investment, she talks about roads and bridges for that very reason.

I also would like to highlight the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund, or OCIF. It's another steady source for predictable and long-term funding for infrastructure projects in small and rural or northern communities. The OCIF provides \$100 million per year to help communities build or repair bridges and other critical infrastructure.

We have already allocated \$50 million per year to 426 communities across the province, using a fair and transparent formula that recognizes that municipalities have different infrastructure needs and fiscal situations. Those key infrastructure investments—I just want to read to you some. My seatmate here, the member from Newmarket-Aurora, challenged the member across with some real examples and numbers.

So here it is. I'll provide you some numbers: \$8 million in Algoma district; \$10 million in Cochrane district; \$3.2 million in Dufferin county; \$5.5 million in Elgin county; \$4.8 million in Essex county; \$1.3 million in Frontenac county; \$1.5 million in Hastings county; \$1.9 million in Kenora district; \$2.2 million in Lambton county; \$2.2 million in Leeds and Grenville county; \$3.5 million in Nipissing district; \$5.7 million in Parry Sound district; \$4.8 million in Peterborough county; \$3 million in Prescott and Russell; \$2.7 million in Rainy River district; \$5.7 million in Renfrew county—my good friend from Renfrew county is not here, but he's happy to hear that, I'm sure—\$3.5 million in Simcoe county; \$2.4 million in Sudbury district; \$5.3 million in—

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. Point of order.

1450

Ms. Lisa Thompson: Speaker, I don't think that it's appropriate in this House when a member draws attention to whether another member is present or not.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you for that point of order. I'd just remind the member that the tradition of this House is not to mention anybody who's not here.

Mr. Han Dong: I'm sorry, Speaker, but I thought I'd share some good news with the House; it's exciting.

This is very obvious, that this government, on this side, has been investing based on a very fair manner. Really, we looked at what people need and what we can do to make their commute easier when it comes to infrastructure investment.

I am very proud of our record. I agree with the motion, I'll be supporting it, but I just want to point out that if we are going to speak to fairness, we need to speak fairly to the facts.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Ted Arnott: The member for Perth–Wellington has brought forward a very important initiative into this House this afternoon, calling upon the government to “guarantee that government-held ridings and opposition-held ridings be given equal and transparent consideration on infrastructure funding, and that when funding decisions are made,” the government “should guarantee that all MPPs, whether in government or opposition, be given fair and equal advance notice of the official announcement.” I completely agree with what the member is proposing, and I hope that all members will support it when it comes to a vote later on this afternoon.

But I want to give credit to the member for Perth–Wellington for the great job that he does in this House, on behalf of the people of his riding, Perth–Wellington, as well as being a trusted voice for rural Ontario as a whole. I’ve been privileged to work with him. Because we both share parts of Wellington county, we work together on a whole range of issues affecting the county of Wellington. I’ve come to know him very well.

He is a trusted voice for rural and small-town Ontario. He’s a trusted voice for local health care services in his riding and a trusted voice on agriculture. He’s a trusted community builder, because of the great work that he has done as a local community leader—even before he was elected to the Legislature, four years ago this very week, on October 6, 2011. He’s a trusted father and grandfather, and I know his family supports him; he’s very fortunate to have the love and support of his family.

I think he has outlined in his speech this afternoon a number of good reasons why this resolution needs to be brought to the floor of the Legislature. Surely the government is going to be fair to all ridings across the province, not punish ridings for the way they voted in the last election if they elected an opposition member and not take that kind of an approach, especially when it comes to—imagine—health care funding. If, indeed, the government is using health care funding and hospital capital announcements, and punishing communities that haven’t voted for a Liberal candidate in the election, that’s just totally unacceptable—if, indeed, that’s happening.

There are a number of examples that we have been talking about today, of course. In the 2012 Liberal budget, the government reneged on a number of promises that were made in the 2011 election, four of which were in PC-held ridings. Again, apparently commitments were made for a new emergency room at the South Bruce Grey Health Centre in Kincardine—a \$52-million emergency room, the first part of a \$105-million hospital rebuild—promised before the election, but then axed after the election.

A \$30-million expansion of the ambulatory and mental health wings at Wingham and District Hospital in Huron–Bruce, promised before the election, was cancelled after the election—again, a riding that’s held by the member for Huron–Bruce, our member Lisa Thompson. The government has since offered only \$3 million for upgrades and maintenance for a project that really requires \$30 million.

Projects at Brockville General Hospital’s mental health and St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital’s emergency, ambulatory and in-patient projects were both restructured to reduce government costs—again, promises made before the election and then axed after the election. After seven years of development and planning, the McGuinty Liberals cancelled plans for a \$136.8-million rebuild of the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital.

These are a number of examples. We bring them to the House today. We ask the government to respond. But certainly we continue to call upon the government to be fair to all ridings across the province, not to be so aggressively partisan such that they’re actually in some cases penalizing and punishing ridings for the way they voted or for their historical voting patterns.

Certainly when there have been infrastructure announcements in my riding by the government, I have tried to, obviously, publicly thank the government for their support of these projects. In many cases they are projects that I have advocated for vocally in this House and will continue to do so. Certainly we appreciate the infrastructure investments in Wellington–Halton Hills, and I’m prepared to thank the government. Again, I would ask them to think about the way they’ve behaved in some of these other instances, in some of the other ridings held by opposition members, and pause for a minute and consider how petty it seems that they’re behaving in some of these cases. Excessive partisanship is not what the people of Ontario want or what the people of Ontario will be voting for in the next election.

Again, I’d ask the members opposite to consider that and ask them to support this resolution today to show that, going forward at least, we’re going to have fairness in terms of infrastructure announcements and that, when announcements are made, there’s going to be an extension of respect to the elected members, whether they are government members or opposition members.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Once again, it’s always a pleasure and a privilege to stand on behalf of the good people of Algoma–Manitoulin.

Just before I start, there are a few individuals I want to recognize. I don’t think many of us take the time to recognize the amount of work—I would ask you, Mr. Speaker, to look at the corner over there. There is always a smile in that corner over there. Her name is Lizzie, and she does a fantastic job for us for translation. She is always smiling, even when you meet her out in the hallways. It’s always great to see her.

These wonderful things that we have, I would encourage you to get familiar with them, because some of my speech will be in French today, so some of you might want to listen.

I also want to say to a good friend of mine, who I firmly believe is family: Stew, take care, buddy. I’m thinking about you.

It’s always a privilege to stand in this House and share a few words, particularly with the member from Perth–

Wellington, who I want to congratulate, first on bringing this bill forward. I think it's an important discussion that we need to have in this House. Also, I want to congratulate him on his anniversary, as well as mine. It's our fourth year together.

There are quite a few of us in this room who came in in the class of 2011, and I know it's a significant milestone for all of us. That group that did come in in 2011, from all three parties: I believe we have a special bond, all of us. We came in in a minority government and we learned very quickly how we have to work together. It was nice to be part of that group and I cherish every opportunity we have, when we do have a discussion together about various things.

When it comes to this particular bill, I'm always one to stand in my place, and I try to always be positive. I've worked with members from my friend's caucus here on several occasions. I see my good friend from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound over there. We worked extremely hard, along with Minister Gravelle, in order to make sure that the Chi-Cheemaun ran when it needed to operate; that on the \$40 million that could have been lost over the course of those periods, we dug our heels in, we rolled up our sleeves and we said, "We've got to get this done." That is something that I can hold with great pride, that all of us did together.

It's funny—and I don't know if I shared this with my friend. The day I was going to South Baymouth, there was a huge protest. The community members were frustrated that their request for help wasn't being answered. I stood there, and I was going to say some maybe aggressive words toward the minister—and it's funny, because in South Baymouth there's not very much cell service, but he got me on my cell. He called me; he reached out. He said, "Hey, Mike, I want you to know we came through with it and we got it." The whole tone of the announcement changed that day. I have to say, kudos to the minister. He gave me the opportunity to make the official announcement that the funding had come through; the boat was going to sail; the docks were going to be repaired. That's a good-news story. You give credit where credit is due.

I have to remember as well that on another occasion I harassed my good friend, who was then the Minister of Transportation and is now the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. He took a personal interest in my issue. He actually came down to the riding in Espanola. We looked at the area of road that was of concern for the community of Espanola and also all of the municipalities that are on the island. He understood the need.

1500

I'm an MPP who believes that you need to touch, feel, taste and see in order for you to make that decision. I have to give a shout-out to him; he actually came out and saw it. The investment came through. The repairs were done just recently.

Those are just a couple of examples, and I do have other examples where I've worked with my colleagues

from the opposition party and with the government. But there are other opportunities where that invitation didn't come through, to my friend who is smiling, who will remain nameless right now.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Not Arthur Potts.

Mr. Michael Mantha: No, no. You don't say that.

Il est venu à l'île Manitoulin, et puis il y a eu une annonce sur l'agriculture, dans l'aquaculture. Quand il est venu, l'annonce s'est faite, mais c'est bizarre que la journée où ça a été annoncé—j'ai été notifié, monsieur le Président, mais j'ai été notifié la soirée d'avant à 10 h 30 du soir. C'est un petit peu difficile de se rendre à l'annonce qui est à 9 h le lendemain matin.

Ça fait qu'il y a des fois où on peut travailler ensemble. Je comprends parfaitement que ce que le membre demande, c'est qu'il y ait une appréciation, surtout dans les annonces qu'on partage, qu'on fasse certain que ceci est fait pour le public. Ce n'est pas pour le parti. Ce n'est pas pour une position. C'est vraiment pour les gens qui ont fait l'effort, qui ont rempli les demandes, qui ont fait le projet, qui ont étudié et ont fait les études et puis qui ont surtout mis l'ouvrage.

Pour nous, c'est facile. On arrive, on prend la photo, c'est fini, et on part. Mais c'est pour les autres gens qui participent et qui travaillent avec tellement de ténacité pour faire certain que les besoins de leur communauté sont rendus, et il faut qu'on respecte ça. À la fin de la journée, c'est pour le public.

In saying that, at the end of the day, it is a public announcement. It's not gamesmanship; it's not partisanship. What the member's motion here is asking is to consider that he and others are all there—that this is for the public good of everybody, and consideration should be done for everyone so that everyone can benefit.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: It gives me pleasure to rise today on behalf of my constituents in Cambridge, and for those watching at home—I know Bev and John are watching, and my son Declan, who's home from school sick today. So what does he want to do? He wants to see his mother. This is a way to do it. I hope he's feeling better soon.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of being a government that is investing so much in infrastructure across this great province of ours. The government's infrastructure spending is based on formulas to ensure fairness, and I think the member from Perth-Wellington knows that. In fact, no member of this House would need to look very hard to find examples of infrastructure investments made in every single part of this province.

If the member for Perth-Wellington wanted to tally up lists of examples, I'm sure he'd find that opposition-held ridings are seeing considerable investment under this government. It's interesting that he and several other members across the way have used the word "punish." It was a word that I heard in Cambridge for a few years while the Cambridge Memorial Hospital expansion did not go ahead. I worked at the institution. I knew what

was happening behind the scenes. Mr. Speaker, many people out in the community used to say the Liberal government was punishing Cambridge for being an unheld riding in not going forward. In fact, because the hospital unfortunately had to go under supervision, all of their expansion plans had to go off the rails for a while until a new administrator was found. They were able to come forward with plans that could be supported, and the Cambridge Memorial Hospital went ahead.

When I was answering those people in the community—and this is before I was elected, Speaker—I would say, “Well, what about Woodstock?” They would say, “What do you mean, ‘What about Woodstock?’” I said, “They built a new hospital in Woodstock, an unheld riding, and it opened in 2011.” No punishment here; it was just the circumstances of those very, very individual communities.

Last week, I went to Pelham in the riding of Niagara West—Glanbrook to cut a ribbon with the mayor—he actually stopped to kick the tires on the new transit bus—to be part of the MTO’s Community Transportation Pilot Grant. That community successfully got one of the pilot grants and started a bus transit in that pilot project. That is certainly an unheld riding.

This summer, I went to many government announcements to help show our infrastructure investments in communities such as Leamington and Sarnia—and the member from Sarnia—Lambton was at that very happy announcement—Mount Forest and Woodstock. There were a number of different announcements that I was able to make throughout unheld ridings in the south-west—and definitely, those communities are not being punished by any stretch; they are actually fitting into the formula that Ontario has provided to ensure fairness for a number of different communities across here—funding announcement calls that I’ve done for the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund and other ministry programs all over the southwest region.

In fact, 88% of the Ontario community infrastructure projects are in ridings held by members of opposition parties; 79% of those municipalities that receive funding have a population under 15,000, 65% have a population under 10,000 and 42% have a population under 5,000. I would challenge the members of the opposition: When they hear that some of the funding is coming to their municipalities, instead of complaining about it, I’d love to hear a thank you. Their mayors and their communities are asking for that.

Another great example of the fairness we’ve been talking about, of ensuring we’re investing and making a real difference across our whole province, is the Small Communities Fund. We launched it as part of the Building Canada Fund, the first province in Canada to do so. Through that, we’ve provided \$272 million that’s matched by our federal government, to support projects in municipalities with populations of fewer than 100,000.

Here’s the thing, Mr. Speaker: Of the 86 projects we’ve nominated for federal approval through the Small Communities Fund, 39 are in PC ridings and 27 are in

NDP ridings, which means 66 projects out of 86 are in opposition ridings. Our government understands that strong leadership means tackling our transit and infrastructure challenges in all.

I’ll close by saying that the member from Perth—Wellington can’t criticize us for making infrastructure investments, vote against the budget that contains them and then come to cut the ribbon at these announcements. I challenge him to decide what side of the fence he’d like to be on.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Harris: Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to comment on this timely motion to guarantee that all ridings be given equal and transparent consideration on infrastructure funding and that MPPs, whether in government or in opposition, be given fair and equal advance notice of that official announcement. It will be that call for equal advance notice on which I will be focusing most of my remarks today.

It’s unfortunate that the member for Perth—Wellington should even have to bring forth a motion like this, as guarantees for fair, equal consideration should go without saying in the democratic system we work in here in Ontario, a system built to uphold the principles of government by the people. In the end, it’s about the people, and when government fails to behave fairly and equitably to all the people it’s elected to represent, then government is not doing the job it was elected to do.

I said it should go without saying, it should be a given; but, unfortunately, as we’ve seen time and again with the current regime, fair and equal consideration is continually ignored in favour of partisan behaviour that really falls well short of the principles we were all elected to uphold. The sad fact is that this government has become so arrogant and out of touch that they actually believe, when they hand out cheques, it’s their money to do with as they please, to shower over government ridings while only loosening the tap to drip onto opposition ridings when it suits their partisan needs, all the while doing their best to freeze out the local member in the process.

1510

Last week I informed the Legislature that I was writing the Integrity Commissioner following the most recent example of government arrogance and partisan promotion in my riding of Kitchener—Conestoga. I requested an investigation into the use of a September 1 private, invite-only Ontario government, taxpayer funding announcement in St. Jacobs by the member from Kitchener Centre and the Minister of Agriculture as a platform to promote the Kitchener Centre federal Liberal candidate, Raj Saini.

Given the commissioner’s August 11 email to all MPPs relating to federal election participation, that “government resources should not be used for partisan purposes,” I was very surprised to see the federal candidate at the private, provincial taxpayer funding announcement, alongside the provincial Liberal members. Heck, I was surprised about the entire event itself, because in

contrast to the focus of today's motion, far from being given fair and equal advance notice of the official announcement, I was only informed of the 9:15 a.m. event in a quick email to my constituency office inbox at 8:51 p.m. the previous evening.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock.

If some members don't hear me, I'll stand up, so that you can hear me. The next call will be a warning.

Carry on.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'll repeat: I was only informed of the 9:15 a.m. event in a quick email to my constituency inbox at 8:51 p.m. the previous evening, obviously well after my constituency office had closed, titled "Event FYIs." It just so happened that I was in the area for an earlier public event in St. Jacobs that morning, and luckily my constituency office was quick to notify me of the late-hour notice that we had received in time for me to be a part of the taxpayer funding announcement for a business in my riding.

You see, without the guarantees that this motion calls for, these are the games these guys have played and will continue to play and get away with, because no one calls them out. Well, it has gone too far, too long, and they can't just keep using our resources to disrespect the democratic principles they are here to uphold.

Even worse, when I did call them out for their partisan game-playing, the member for Kitchener Centre tried to play the announcement off as a public event, which even the grant recipient told reporters it was not. Worse than that, the member then tried to say I was invited to the event as a goodwill gesture. Twelve hours before an event that her federal Liberal friend was obviously well prepared for, I get an evening email to my constituency office marked "Event FYIs" for a taxpayer funding announcement to a company in my riding, and she calls that a gesture of goodwill? No.

First of all, there was no goodwill about it. The late nature of notice was clearly intended to ensure that I was unable to attend. Second of all, this is a riding I represent. These are the people, no matter what political stripe, who I represent. In a democratic system of government, the elected representative, on behalf of his or her Ontario taxpayers, deserves to be given fair and equal advance notice of an official announcement. It's as simple as that, and yet this government fails to grasp this simple concept.

Goodwill has nothing to do with it, nor should it. When government makes investments into companies, they are doing it on behalf of everyone in the province and, more specifically, in the area riding. That's a slap in the face of everyone in that riding, to play games in refusing fair and equal advance notice of official announcements.

But again, this is nothing new for this bunch. There is a long and storied history of differing sets of rules being applied to funding announcements and infrastructure funding itself, as this motion speaks to.

Let's take a look at the wide array of transit announcements this government loves to repeat. For years now, we've had to watch as the Wynne Liberals pick winners and losers when it comes to the LRT funding. For instance, some municipalities get full funding, like Mississauga, Brampton, and now Hamilton; some, like us in my region of Waterloo, only get partial funding.

Brampton, Mississauga and Hamilton are getting 100% full funding for their LRT; they have no skin in the game. And yet, in Waterloo we had to watch as the same government's original commitment for two-thirds funding was slashed to only a third, leaving Waterloo region municipal taxpayers to pick up the province's shortfalls. As I said at the time of the Brampton and Mississauga announcements, I guess, as the old country song goes, "They got the gold mine, and we got the shaft."

As we heard from my Perth-Wellington colleague, everyone pays taxes and should receive a similar quality of infrastructure and services, regardless of whose riding they live in. Provincial infrastructure decisions should be based on merit—full stop. Basing the use of taxpayers' money on politics only further leads us down the rabbit hole toward more gas plant fiascos that cost us all while one party achieves their goals of partisan gain. It's wrong. It has got to stop—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

The member for Perth-Wellington, you have two minutes for your response.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I want to thank all members who addressed this motion today—from Windsor-Tecumseh, Trinity-Spadina, Wellington-Halton Hills, Algoma-Manitoulin, Cambridge and Kitchener-Conestoga.

If anything, this motion has started the debate. I think that if the government will take the opportunity here, they have the opportunity to make this system better. There are 115 municipalities right now—and we're still getting emails from them—that don't agree that this system is working.

Gary McNamara had issues at AMO—you were all there; you heard this. I think if you take anything out of this motion, you'll support it because it gives you an opportunity to make the process better. That's all this motion is doing right now. Both members of the NDP certainly understand the need for this to happen. This is certainly not about partisan politics—

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It is so.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It's certainly not about partisan politics because—

Interjections.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: No. I am not making these stories up.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the member to address the Chair.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Sorry.

I am not making these stories up, Speaker. These are stories that come into our office. These are things that happened in my riding and in other ridings. But, if they

sit there on the defensive of these things all the time, they're never going to solve them, they've never going to make the system work better. That's all we're asking them to look at. That's all the municipalities that have written to me want to happen: to make the process fair as far as funding decisions.

Certainly, we all worked as hard as each other to get elected to this House. Because we're sitting in opposition, we should not be excluded from funding announcements in our ridings. That's just simply not fair.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll take the vote on the motion at the end of private members' public business.

AGRICULTURE AND FOOD LITERACY SENSIBILISATION À L'AGRICULTURE ET AUX PRODUITS AGRICOLES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government should recognize the importance of agriculture and food literacy by ensuring that the Ministry of Education includes a mandatory component of career opportunities associated with Ontario's agri-food industry in the grades 9 and 10 guidance and career education curriculum.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Thompson has moved private member's notice of motion number 14. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: First of all, I would like to start my comments off by commending my good friends and neighbours the MPP for Perth–Wellington and the MPP for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound on their thoughtful and relevant PMBs they shared with this House this afternoon. I know first-hand how committed they are to their constituents and how committed they are to holding this government to account. I thank them for that.

In the spirit of the Blue Jays, I can't help but remark on the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound's haircut. Clearly, he idolizes Josh Donaldson. That would make the member for Perth–Wellington Bautista. I guess, this afternoon, I have the opportunity and honour of being Encarnacion. I'll be the cleanup hitter this afternoon. We're going to hit it out of the park with this one.

So, with that, I want to talk about a very important element that I have been committed to my entire career. After University of Guelph, I worked for the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, after which I became general manager for the Ontario Dairy Goat Co-operative. That co-operative allowed me the opportunity to realize and continue my support for an organization called Ontario Agri-Food Education. This is an organization that has been around for a number of years—in fact, it evolved out of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Next year, in 2016, it will be celebrating its 25th anniversary. That anniversary is going to be special, because for 25 years they've worked hard to ensure that teachers who are interested in teaching about

agriculture in the classroom, from primary through to the senior high school years, had the proper curriculum to base their teachings on.

1520

But we need to do better, and my motion is very, very important—I'll get to that in a second—because while some might say that agriculture in the classroom is already happening, I disagree with that. I have to tell you that it isn't happening consistently throughout the province. My motion is very specifically about ensuring that every single grade 9 and 10 student in Ontario is aware of the amazing job opportunities that they may want to consider.

Food production, meaning farming, computer science, research and technology, food science, marketing, processing and mechanical engineering, which are just a few of the careers—I could go on; the list is truly endless. But what I really want to share is that this list, which is endless, underscores the importance of young people being aware, because I can tell you that we know the agri-food industry is an industry where there are jobs without people. We've known this for some time. In fact, I'm sure some of the members throughout the entire House will recall a few years ago when a report came out from the University of Guelph that stated for every new grad there were three or four jobs waiting for them. Clearly, there's a gap here.

My motion today, which has been strongly supported throughout the agri-food industry, is about closing that gap. My motion today is about all of us here in this House, all 107 members, working together so we can help the Premier realize a goal that she had.

When the Premier was Minister of Agriculture and Food a couple of years ago, she challenged the agri-food industry to create 120,000 new jobs by 2020. It's an aspiring goal, because we know this government likes to have aspirational goals—but we won't talk about neonics today. We want to talk about helping the Premier close that gap and help people realize that there are amazing jobs out there. But they'll only realize that if it's made mandatory to teach about the amazing agri-food careers in the grades 9 and 10 career and guidance curriculum.

I want to take a moment and reflect on some of the support that I've received over the last six months since I first introduced this motion during Local Food Week in June. For instance, Robert Gordon, the dean of the Ontario Agricultural College at the University of Guelph, said this motion “will support an improved level of awareness of the sector and the huge and growing opportunities that exist within.”

Colleen Smith, executive director for Ontario Agri-Food Education, said, “OAFE is committed to supporting the economic success of the agri-food industry in Ontario by helping students understand trends and themes occurring in the sector while at the same time motivate them to explore the diverse career opportunities that exist.”

James Rilett, vice-president of Restaurants Canada, said, “Today's consumers want to know where their food

comes from, but they also want to know about the process. This understanding needs to start earlier. Including agriculture and food education in the Ontario curriculum is a great place to start.”

Don McCabe—whom we all know and love in this House—president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, said, “OFA supports this initiative ... recognizing the importance of helping youth learn of the varied and growing opportunities available in the agri-food sector.”

Mark Brock, chair of Grain Farmers of Ontario, said, “Educating youth on the wide range of career choices that exist will help fill the gap the agriculture industry is currently facing.”

Jim Goetz, president of the Canadian Beverage Association, went on to say, “To encourage more young people to get involved and excited about the agri-food sector is beneficial for local communities and all Ontarians.” CBA supports “any future opportunities to promote growing this important sector of our economy and make Ontario a leader within Canada’s agri-food industry.”

Last but not least, Plamen Petkov, of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, said, “Adding agri-food education to the curriculum will allow younger generations to understand the options that are available to them.”

That’s really what this is about. This isn’t about voluntarily having cute little segments about agriculture in the classroom. This is about making students absolutely, positively excited and aware of their future job opportunities.

I share that, Speaker, because it’s important to recognize the significance that the agri-food sector has here alone in the GTHA. In December 2013, the city of Toronto announced that there were 1,149 food and beverage manufacturing establishments, employing over 51,000 people. They also went on to say:

“Within Ontario, Toronto dominates the provincial food industry with more than half of all the food processing in the province taking place within the greater Toronto region.

“About 47.2% of Ontario’s employment in the food and beverage sector was in Toronto.... The total annual sales ... were estimated to be \$16.9 billion or 47.2% of Ontario’s annual sales of \$35.81 billion in 2011.”

Speaker, this is a huge industry, and we can’t afford to have good-paying jobs going without people recognizing an opportunity that lies there. I share that because, in speaking to people from Conestoga College, who have a wonderful foodservice program, they shared their dismay with me because they can’t fill the seats that they have dedicated towards food science. They don’t have enough students aware and interested in applying. When we want our young people to stay in Ontario, when we want our young people to grow their families in Ontario, we need to ensure that they understand the viable opportunities that exist right here in Ontario as well.

As I mentioned before, the whole concept of agriculture in the classroom has been around for quite some

time. Again, I’ve dedicated my entire career to ensuring that young people have an appreciation of agriculture but, more importantly, understand the future that allows this province to feel good about keeping our young people here in this province.

It’s about economics, and we all know that the agri-food sector in Ontario is, some would say, second-largest to the automotive industry. But, as the president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture points out, you can’t eat a car. So the agri-food industry is incredibly important to this province.

I also want to share with you that teachers need to be comfortable in teaching agricultural content. My understanding is that the Minister of Education earlier today said, “This is already happening in Ontario.” Well, Speaker, the fact of the matter is, there are some areas of Ontario, primarily rural Ontario, that do, indeed, have high-skills major programs focusing on primary agriculture, which is excellent.

But we have to do better. All Ontarians need to be aware of the opportunities, and we need to grow awareness about jobs in the agri-food sector. OAFE is the perfect partner. OAFE is an organization that has ex officio from both the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and the Ministry of Education at the board table, helping guide them in the right direction, so every effort and every investment made in the curriculum is a fit.

They also—“they” being OAFE—have an amazing program known as teacher ambassadors. So while there might be some teachers not comfortable with teaching content that they’re not familiar with, OAFE is there to support these teachers with their ambassadors. It’s a great program where young teachers who may not be able to get a full-time job or get on a supply list have an opportunity to hone their skills as teacher ambassadors and build up their tool box, all the while promoting the agri-food sector. I think this is just an amazing program that enables my motion to transcend into the Ministry of Education in a very smooth manner, and I’ll explain that just as I close.

My motion is not about a new spend; it’s not about creating something new. This motion is about realizing what we already have at our disposal. We have an amazing not-for-profit organization that will be celebrating its 25th anniversary next year, and we can couple that with a curriculum that’s already in place by embedding agri-food careers into grade 9 and 10 curriculum. This is a win for everyone, and hopefully, by 2020, the agri-food sector will have created 120,000 new jobs.

1530

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Cindy Forster: It’s my honour to rise and add to the discussion on private member’s motion 14, on agri-food being added to the educational curriculum, from the member for Huron-Bruce. I think it’s a great motion, actually, and I’m certainly going to support it. I only have about three or four minutes, so I’m just going to

focus on the importance of agri-food jobs in my own riding of Welland and across Niagara.

In fact, as a teenager, many, many years ago when I was 15 or 16, I spent my summers working in the canning factories in Niagara-on-the-Lake, at Bick's pickles in the Dunnville area. It provided a lot of jobs for youth. It wasn't a pretty job. It was a very tiring job, where you're on an assembly line, processing peaches, plums, pickles or whatever. But it certainly taught you the importance of getting a good education and moving on to something else in your life if you didn't want to be doing that every year, over the seasonal operation.

In my own riding, I attended a ribbon cutting for Niagara Peninsula Homes. Now, you'll wonder what the connection is with agri-foods, but Niagara Peninsula Homes, which has been in operation for many, many years and manages and operates co-op housing and some non-profit housing across the Niagara region, also has what is called the Niagara Women's Enterprise Centre and Niagara Presents. Niagara Presents actually has a business that sees women who maybe have fled their homes because of violence or they've emigrated from another country without a lot of educational skills. They work with farmers and produce all kinds of products in conjunction with Vineland's Cherry Lane. They use a Niagara Presents label, and they sell these products. They make gift baskets with preserves and different sauces and things they've made, and the money they raise is used for other enterprises for women.

In addition to doing that, Niagara Peninsula Homes does a property and maintenance co-op program. They provide housing support and property management. Most recently, they actually have a teen energy program where they take youth at risk and put them through their program. This group was actually responsible for renovating this new building, which was an old historic building in the city, and they now have all their programs under one roof.

I would be remiss if I didn't speak about our wine industry, which certainly falls under this bill. Certainly we're very proud of our wine industry in Niagara. It's hard to keep track of the number of wineries we have, because some of them have merged. Sometimes there are almost 200, and then the numbers may reduce as the wineries group together. But certainly the wine industry has produced hundreds of jobs for people in Niagara.

The research station in Vineland, in the riding of the member for Niagara West—Glanbrook, Mr. Hudak, was created about 15 years ago to bring together grape growers, the federal and provincial ministries, the University of Guelph, Brock University and Niagara College: all those people who were starting to delve into winemaking and the training of winemakers. It, in fact, has created its own set of workers with value-added jobs in the whole research piece.

I think this bill is very important. As I said, I'm going to support it, and I look forward to the end result here.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Granville Anderson: Thank you to the member from Huron—Bruce for bringing this forward. I would also like to thank the member from Welland for her contribution to the debate.

I am thrilled to be speaking to this motion as I must say that I am very supportive of its goals, having lived and grown up all my life around agriculture in my lovely riding of Durham.

I was just talking to the Ontario Federation of Agriculture as part of Agriculture Week about this very topic. I always ask how we can better engage the public, especially young people, on the potential for them in agriculture.

We also got a splendid showcase of the diversity of the agri-food sector at Glengarry—Prescott—Russell day just yesterday right here in this Legislature.

In Durham, we have a vibrant and varied agricultural sector. Businesses both directly and indirectly related to agriculture make up a large part of our local economy, so I've had the great pleasure, since being elected, to be a touring guest on many of these farms and facilities. We have a lovely facility in Newcastle that produces a number of things—the best cider you can find anywhere. It's right there in Durham.

Family farms are a cornerstone of our lives here in Durham and also in Ontario in general, and they're incredible economic citizens locally, provincially and internationally.

What they want young people to know is that the tools and approaches to agriculture that they employ come from very diverse fields of study. Agriculture is truly a modern and constantly advancing industry, and promoting that message is key to sustainability.

Genetics and biology, chemistry, physics and engineering: The sciences are very heavily engaged in the agricultural sector, working towards bio-durability of crops and livestock, sustainability of agricultural practices and much, much more.

The social sciences are vital as well, with agricultural economics, labour relations, communications and beyond. You can name almost any field of study, and chances are it has a significant relationship with agriculture.

I think it's highly important that students are given the chance to see the opportunities before them, and that is why I think this motion is worth debating.

I recently held an agricultural round table in Nestleton which was well attended. We had over 40 people from the agricultural sector in attendance—Nestleton is in the heart of our farming community—and we invited representatives from across the agricultural sector. This was a wonderful opportunity to hear their comments and concerns, and part of those comments were how we can engage young people to become involved on the family farm.

This was a wonderful opportunity to hear their comments and to try to address their comments as best as I could by contacting the local college, which is Durham College, and asking about programs and the possibility of

having programs in that community that would enhance the agricultural sector.

I certainly hear about educating youth about opportunities in the field, but I also hear about the importance of food literacy and the impact that students make as consumers and local stewards in their communities.

I am very supportive of having agriculture in careers classes in our high schools, and I think our government has already done quite a good job of giving schools the tools to spread this message.

Our existing curriculum provides a variety of opportunities for students to learn about agriculture and food processing, and we have implemented the Local Food Act and encouraged 26 specialist high-skills majors in agriculture, but I think there's always potential to go beyond.

Ontarians should know what sort of choices they are making when they go to the grocery store and where their food is coming from. They need to be encouraged to ask about the journey their food has taken, the good people who have been involved in that process and how it affects their health and well-being.

1540

Agriculture in Ontario helps to combat food insecurity and inequity, and these topics should be encouraged for discussion. I think our government is doing an excellent job of advocating for more agricultural education, but for me, the sky certainly is the limit.

Where we are in Durham is, like many parts of Ontario, a mix of urban and rural. The boundary brings agricultural activities almost to the subdivision fences. Having programs like this in the classrooms shows Ontarian students that their relationship with farmers and agriculture doesn't end at the fence. It has the impact of promoting greater understanding of normal farm practices and creating greater harmony and civic knowledge.

I feel very strongly that there is a need to make agriculture a larger part of students' education in this province, and that's why I am pleased to be supporting this motion today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Patrick Brown: It is a pleasure to rise and speak in support of the bill put forward by the member for Huron-Bruce. Let me congratulate the member for Huron-Bruce for her hard work on this bill. I think it says a lot about her passion.

The fact that we heard earlier today the Minister of Agriculture express his support for the bill, and just now the member for Welland and the member for Durham all speaking about why this is a necessary step, and the fact that you're seeing united cross-partisan support, really highlight the quality of this bill and, from a personal note, how lucky I feel to have the member for Huron-Bruce in the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus.

Ontario's farming origins are a huge part of our rich history. Agriculture in our province is not just a romantic idea of the past, but very much of central importance to

our province's future. Ontario's agri-food industry contributes \$34 billion annually to Ontario's GDP and supports upwards of three quarters of a million jobs.

Unfortunately, the agri-food industry continues to have a low profile in the job market. Despite the challenge to the sector that the Premier made herself, when she was the Minister of Agriculture, to create 120,000 new jobs by 2020, we're obviously not there yet, and there is much work to do.

Each graduate from an agriculture degree program in this province today has approximately three ag-related jobs available to him or her upon graduation. This bill supports providing students an improved level of awareness of the sector and employment opportunities that exist. Properly educating Ontario's youth on the array of career choices can only help fill the gaps. I have spoken many times across the province about the need to better link education to employment, and this is an example of the type of sector where that would be so helpful.

This bill will also help reinvigorate a sector understandably frustrated in recent years. A January 2015 survey by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business noted that 35% of farmers are discouraging their own children from carrying on the family farming business, mainly because of the endless red tape and regulation. This bill is an opportunity to highlight the opportunities that exist and how we all hope to make this sector great again.

Adding agri-food education to the syllabus will help students make educated decisions about their future if they choose the agri-food industry. This foundation will better equip them to navigate the system in the future.

I recall when I was young, prior to the age of 10, my family had a farm just outside of Midland. I remember speaking to neighbours; you remember things differently when you're a child, but I remember very distinctly that there was pride. There was pride in farming. What I love about this bill is that it raises those possibilities to students. It raises those possibilities to young people and helps bring back an enhanced pride in the agriculture sector.

Ontario is home to some of the best farmland in Canada, and we should celebrate that. We should celebrate the opportunities that exist, and that the people involved in this sector are some of the hardest-working people you could ever imagine. The Ontario PC caucus understands and supports our farmers. Cultivating a new and enthusiastic generation of agriculture will grow our economy, feed our cities and keep our families together, and carry on one of Ontario's finest traditions.

Today's consumers also want to know where their food comes from, and want to know about the process. This understanding needs to start earlier. Including agriculture and food education in classrooms would be a great catalyst for this earlier start and for building a foundation of knowledge with young people.

The OFA agrees greater education targeting young students is needed and is very important. Actually, this bill dovetails well with their lobbying efforts. The OFA

is launching their own food literacy program, Six by Sixteen, to help guide young people to plan and learn and prepare six healthy meals by the age of 16. When I met with members of the OFA executive earlier this week, I talked about the member for Huron–Bruce's bill, and they enthusiastically thought it was a great initiative.

So I just wanted to say very briefly today why this is a great bill and why this would be of benefit to Ontario. I would encourage all members in the House to support it, but I'd really encourage the government to take the spirit of this bill and make sure that we add it to the school curriculum as soon as possible, and hopefully as soon as next year, because this is a step forward for Ontario.

I thank the member for Huron–Bruce for putting all of her hard work and efforts into this.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

M. Michael Mantha: C'est tout un plaisir de porter parole des gens d'Algoma–Manitoulin et d'offrir mes commentaires au débat.

Je veux féliciter ma collègue et aussi la souhaiter un bon anniversaire pour sa quatrième année. Elle est une amie. On a participé ensemble—nous sommes venus comme députés ici à Queen's Park en 2011. Avec elle aussi, comme plusieurs de ses collègues, on a eu ce moment-là où on a appris à travailler ensemble, avec mes collègues de notre caucus, de leur caucus et du gouvernement.

Ce qu'elle propose aujourd'hui dans sa motion, que «the government should recognize the importance of agriculture and food literacy by ensuring that the Ministry of Education includes a mandatory component of career opportunities associated with Ontario's agri-food industry in the grades 9 and 10 guidance and career education curriculum», c'est une motion fantastique, et on devrait en avoir plus, pour donner la chance à nos enfants, premièrement, d'avoir une discussion sur l'agriculture, mais aussi, pendant qu'ils sont là, qu'on fasse certain qu'ils peuvent voir le futur et que le futur va être là avec beaucoup de soutien : qu'ils vont avoir les outils, qu'ils vont avoir une chance à avoir une carrière, et puis que l'éducation va être là pour les aider dans l'avancement de l'agriculture. Si tu n'as pas une vision, si tu ne vois pas une façon que tu vas faire ta vie, si tu n'as pas un rêve d'accomplir une tâche où ça va te revenir, où ça va te faire sentir une personne et te donner la fierté, te donner la chance de participer à une communauté et à aider ton voisin, c'est difficile à offrir cet outil-là à un enfant ou lui donner la vision que «Oui, il y a un potentiel dans l'agriculture.»

Encore, je veux féliciter ma copine pour avoir apporté cette motion. C'est important, pour qu'un enfant ait la chance de dire, «Tu sais, je vois des options dans l'agriculture et je vois une chance où je peux aller et où je vais me faire soutenir par des collègues. Je vais avoir la chance d'élever une famille. Je vais avoir la chance de vraiment avoir une carrière.» Ici, en Ontario, on regarde à tous les défis que le secteur d'agriculture a présentement, et eux autres se tiennent ensemble pour

répondre aux questions et répondre aux besoins. Puis ils regardent à nous ici, comme des représentants, des députés, pour les aider. Ils ne demandent pas de l'aide, ils ne demandent pas tout le temps des ressources, ils ne demandent pas tout le temps la réponse. Mais si on écoute juste un peu et on leur donne les outils, on va se trouver avec un avantage, surtout dans le secteur agricole. C'est la base de ce qu'on a ici en Ontario. C'est eux qui nous portent de jour en jour. C'est eux qui sont la plus grosse industrie ici en Ontario. Il ne faut pas qu'on se trompe de ça.

Pour donner la chance à nos enfants, il faut qu'ils soient capables de voir que, premièrement, il y a les outils, il y a la chance d'avoir une carrière, et puis aussi, qu'il y a l'éducation qui va être là pour les aider à travers leur choix de vie. Merci.

1550

Le Président suppléant (M. Ted Arnett): Merci beaucoup. Further debate?

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: It's a pleasure to rise in my place today and speak to this very important motion. I want to thank the member for Huron–Bruce for raising it. One of the great things about participating in these debates is that you get to know a little bit about members on the opposite side. I didn't know the member went to Guelph, and obviously her passion for agri-food is really clear. I want to thank her for putting this motion forward. I support it and I think it's a great idea and so welcome. Thank you so much for bringing this forward for discussion today.

I'd like to join my colleagues from Welland, Durham, Simcoe North and Algoma–Manitoulin in having this important conversation. It comes on the eve of Thanksgiving, which is a time for all of us to celebrate the bounty of our province and all it has to offer and to thank the hands that grew the food and the hands that brought it to our table. I think it's very fitting that the member puts forward this motion today for this conversation.

I want to join my colleague from Durham in terms of talking about the work that we've done to support our agricultural sector. In his comments, he talked about our curriculum. I think it's important to note as well that the member, in bringing this motion forward today, raises some really important issues. We're doing some great things—I'm going to talk about them in a moment—but it doesn't mean that we can't do better. Thank you for raising this conversation.

We are committed to reviewing and maintaining our world-class curriculum and will continue to consult with Ontario's food and agriculture industry as we do so.

On the topic of food literacy, if I may, I want to speak about our government's first annual Local Food Report, a document we released this past June that provides a baseline and demonstrates our progress in terms of enhancing awareness and demand for food that is grown, harvested and made in Ontario. Within this report is a section on food literacy. The section provides an overview of the food literacy goals that our government established in consultation with stakeholders. They

include such things as increasing the number of Ontarians who know what local foods are available and who know how and where to obtain them.

In my riding of Burlington, one organization comes to mind that is doing great work in this arena. The Halton Food Council is an independent, volunteer-based non-profit organization that represents a broad range of sectors and interests across the food system in Halton region. The council's mission is to promote and support a sustainable local food system and to inspire people into action. By encouraging and facilitating dialogue and collaboration amongst organizations, agencies, services, food producers and distributors, consumers, business and government alike, the council works to develop strategies to help it realize its vision of a fair and sustainable food system where local foods are available and promoted, local agricultural lands and farmers are protected and supported, urban agriculture is encouraged, and food has been produced and distributed in an environmentally responsible way.

Their vision also includes a region where all residents have access to adequate, affordable, safe, nutritious and culturally acceptable food. The council and its volunteers help to support the entire food system, including food production, processing, distribution etc., including waste management, also a very important component of their work.

They support local producers by promoting local farmers' markets and providing resources for residents on where to buy locally grown food.

The Halton Food Council also works with residents to teach them how to grow their own food and has launched a community garden initiative. In so doing, they are helping individuals and local organizations in our region realize a more sustainable food system while helping to reach our government's greater food literacy goals.

By increasing food literacy for all Ontarians, we create an environment that will, of its own accord, create interest in agricultural sector careers and employment. When people and communities are more aware of and can greater appreciate any particular sector or industry, they are more likely to encourage one other and their children to pursue careers within it, especially when that sector is expected to grow.

The Local Food Report, along with the Local Food Fund and the annual Local Food Week, are part of our government's strategy to grow Ontario's agri-food sector.

Our government knows that supporting food grown and harvested and made in Ontario creates jobs and economic growth in communities right across our province.

As the saying goes, "Good Things Grow in Ontario."

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Sing it.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: "Good Things Grow in Ontario." There you go. My mother would be proud.

In Burlington, we're a mid-sized city, with many local food producers just beyond our northern border. But within our community, we have several food processors, and one of those is Sofina Foods. Sofina is a fresh pork processing company and Burlington's second-largest em-

ployer. On any given shift, you will find 850 employees in the Sofina plant. They have an exceptionally diverse workforce, with professional opportunities across many functions of the business. This operation and many like it are growing and expanding, and with this comes the creation of new jobs and opportunities for young people to get a great start in a rewarding career.

The modern agricultural industry now offers a wide array of career opportunities, many of which did not exist even 20 years ago. Young Ontarians can now pursue a future in careers like plant and animal genetics and health, microbiology and biotechnology, or food science and agricultural engineering, to name a few.

Ontario's future workforce may often be unaware of the many high-paying, skilled career opportunities presented by the agri-food sector, and so the responsibility falls in part to us to make sure that they hear about them. We are continuing to increase opportunities across the province for students to learn about jobs in Ontario's agri-food industry, including 26 specialist high-skills majors in agriculture and food processing. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that the member from Durham mentioned these.

I want to close in thanking the member opposite for raising this incredibly important issue, and I look forward to the further debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: This motion is, I feel, really quite important. As our member from Huron-Bruce has explained, an agri-food curriculum really is a proven way to introduce ideas and information, in this case to high school students, exposing them to farming, food and agri-business as a career choice, in this case by wedging ag into the existing careers curriculum.

I have always felt that ag education is good news. It's something I learned growing up on our farms. I studied agriculture in high school for four years; it was a full-blown course back at the time. I studied at the University of Guelph, did an MSc at the agricultural college, and I was fortunate to come back to a Simcoe county school and teach the agriculture program to grades 9, 10, 11 and 12—a 4-year or 5-year stream. It was a full-blown, year-long course for our students. Vestiges of this remain as a specialist high school major in agriculture, but not in enough schools, really.

In the curriculum I taught, we ran a 50-foot greenhouse and we had a chicken barn. Of course, to maintain that as a high school teacher, you're there until 5 o'clock every day with the students. That provided a lot of opportunities to kick around ideas, as well, after 3:30. Many of my schoolmates and many of my students picked up farming as a career; they took over the family farm, or they bought one, and worked hard. They did well in spite of some of the obstacles, and many of those obstacles are mitigated by ongoing education, ongoing extension—something that's also very important.

When we hear words like agri-food and ag literacy, oftentimes we think of farming alone, or segments of agriculture, and it really does encompass everything from

farm gate to plate—the whole journey, really, and beyond, into manufacturing and retail.

As far as careers, many of my students were from town. They get out of high school, and maybe for their first job they're pumping gas. Most of their customers were farmers—farm trucks, diesel, delivering fuel to farms, tractors. Maybe they're involved in construction. Again, there's electrical and plumbing—their customers are farmers, and they could communicate the business of agriculture.

I really feel we would do well, as with this motion, to re-evaluate what we're offering in our school system and to take a look at our school system through a rural lens. It's a bit of a sad state of affairs that today's curriculum really doesn't contain much with respect to traditional agriculture or traditional home economics, let alone present and future approaches to agriculture. It's very important across Canada. Some 8% of our gross domestic product is driven by agri-business; 8% of the value of all Canadian goods comes from the system, and that comes in at about a \$100-billion contribution every year, nationally.

There is an abundance of careers in a variety of fields, not just "out in the field": marketing, food science, research, development, plant and animal genetics, plant and animal biotechnology, microbiology, financial services, ecology—much of the ag course curriculum morphed into the environmental science program in the early 1970s; advertising and government work, because the odd farmer gets elected as an MPP. So there is a future in the business in one way or another.

1600

Much of the business continues to boom, in spite of the odds, and 12% of Canada's employment—out of 2.1 million people, there's a little over 300,000 people involved in just primary agriculture alone, whether it's in a greenhouse, a tree nursery or working on the farm. But there's a tremendous gap, a tremendous need for workers, as we know.

I appreciate the support from all members of the House—this is quite heartening—and support from so many organizations. I'd like to quote an organization called Sustain Ontario: "Making food literacy part of the mainstream school curriculum is supported by 95% of Ontarians." Those changes would provide students with "the necessary skills to make healthy food choices and increase their self-efficacy to prepare nutritious meals for themselves."

MPP Patrick Brown made mention of the OFA. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture launched a program, Six by Sixteen, with the tagline, "We're serving up food literacy." I know President Don McCabe is in the House today. There's a website. You can go to sixbysixteen.me to learn more about this program. The plan is that by age 16, young people would have the ability to prepare, at minimum, six nutritious, comprehensive meals. There's a website and there's an extensive library of resources, videos, recipes, all kinds of advice.

CropLife Canada: Here's another organization. It's a supporter of what they call Agriculture in the Classroom Canada. I've gone through their material. They have a terrific interactive website. They have set up a non-profit spinoff organization to push the knowledge and the understanding, again, focusing on grades 7 to 12.

I fully support this. I saw how it worked through the 1960s and 1970s. It's the way to go.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's an honour to be here today to speak to the motion from the member from Huron—Bruce. I fully support it, and I think everyone here should have a medal because there are a lot of other places they would rather be today.

It's 0-0 in the top of the second, folks.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Thank you.

Mr. John Vanthof: You're welcome.

For those of you who didn't have instantaneous translation for the member for Algoma-Manitoulin, I'm going to do exactly the same speech, or close to it.

All jokes aside, this is a very important motion. We're very proud to support it. Agriculture is the cornerstone of this province. It's the cornerstone of our society. A lot of people don't appreciate how important it is, but even more people don't appreciate how wide a variety of highly skilled jobs are in it. I think that's one of the things that this motion is really looking to direct.

There is a high degree of food illiteracy in this province, and that's a problem in itself. But there's also a high degree of agriculture job illiteracy. This motion speaks to that in spaces.

One of the reasons that I quit milking cows—quit dairy farming—is that I couldn't find someone to manage my dairy farm while I was here. There is a demand for that. There is a huge demand for highly skilled jobs.

I have two kids. Right now one is working full-time in the agriculture field; the other one soon will be. They're not on our dairy farm or on our cash crop farm, but both will have highly paid, highly skilled jobs in agriculture, and that's something we have to expose more children, more students and more young people to.

Agriculture is a very fast-growing, fast-paced industry. A lot of people don't realize that and we have to expose more people to that. I'm very proud to be a farmer here today, to be able to say that, proud to see the OFA, proud to see OAFE here and proud to have worked with Lisa Thompson, the member for Huron-Bruce, in my former life when I was heading the agriculture section at the plowing match.

I remember when we did that, we had thousands of kids come. That part I kind of expected, but we had the superintendent of the school board volunteer, we had a lot of teachers volunteer, and I think they learned more than the kids did. That's something that this motion speaks to, because when you educate the educators, it flows through the whole system. That's what we need to do, because if we educate the educators about the opportunities in agriculture, we will become an even bigger powerhouse in that sector than we are today. Some

people might say, “This doesn’t seem like a big thing.” If we did this, it’s a huge step forward.

In my closing few seconds—and I know we’re all being very positive here, and I like to be positive. But one thing this government has to realize about agriculture—and I’m going to be positive. If you take the issue of certified crop advisers, they are certified, they have a code of ethics and they should be allowed to perform their job. It’s one thing to educate people—you have them educated, they’re qualified, and they say, “Oh, no, no, we don’t think you’re quite qualified enough,” that’s an issue. Those types of issues we also have to look at. I’m hoping to be able to continue to work with the government on those issues.

I fully support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the member for Huron–Bruce. You have two minutes for a response.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I certainly appreciate the comments that we heard from around the House today.

To the member from Welland: You made me think about the region that you proudly represent and I couldn’t help but think of Niagara College and the wine industry. A few years ago, they did an amazing job of marketing and increasing awareness about the industry and the opportunities that were connected to it. And guess what? They have a burgeoning college program now in the wine industry. That’s an example that this motion would like to follow, in the sense that if you do it properly, you increase awareness and students will come.

To the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane: We will be a bigger powerhouse in the nation because of that, and I very much appreciated that.

To the member from Durham: You mentioned the cider industry in your region. I can tell you, I have a number of family members who probably pricked up their ears and will want to take a road trip to your riding because they are connoisseurs of cider, if you will.

Mr. Granville Anderson: Applefest is next weekend.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Okay. Very good.

To the leader of the PC Party: I really appreciated his comments. It is with pride that we all stand here today and talk about the need to increase awareness of one of the best sectors that drives Ontario’s economy.

To the member from Burlington: When I worked for OMAFRA, I worked in the regions of Halton and Peel and I know about the primary production in your area. I know about the processing. I’m glad you touched on that today, and I thank you for that.

The list goes on and on. The representative from Algoma–Manitoulin said something that stuck with me and will stay with me. This will allow students to have a discussion about agriculture. We need those discussions because we have to have a very real picture painted so that they can be enthused about growing jobs and pursuing careers in agriculture.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time provided for private members’ public business has expired.

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS ELECTION ADVERTISING TRANSPARENCY ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LA TRANSPARENCE DE LA PUBLICITÉ ÉLECTORALE DES GROUPES D’INTÉRÊT PARTICULIER

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 70 standing in the name of Mr. Walker.

Mr. Walker has moved second reading of Bill 96, An Act to amend the Election Finances Act with respect to third party election advertising.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed to the motion will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

We will deal with the vote at the end of private members’ business.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

FINANCEMENT DES INFRASTRUCTURES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Pettapiece has moved private member’s notice of motion number 53.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

AGRICULTURE AND FOOD LITERACY SENSIBILISATION À L’AGRICULTURE ET AUX PRODUITS AGRICOLES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Thompson has moved private member’s notice of motion number 14.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS ELECTION ADVERTISING TRANSPARENCY ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LA TRANSPARENCE DE LA PUBLICITÉ ÉLECTORALE DES GROUPES D’INTÉRÊT PARTICULIER

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1611 to 1616.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Walker has moved second reading of Bill 96, An Act to amend the Election Finances Act with respect to third

party election advertising. All those in favour, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Brown, Patrick
Clark, Steve
DiNovo, Cheri
Fedeli, Victor
Forster, Cindy
Harris, Michael

Hudak, Tim
Jones, Sylvia
MacLaren, Jack
Mantha, Michael
Martow, Gila
McDonnell, Jim
Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia
Nicholls, Rick

Pettapiece, Randy
Scott, Laurie
Smith, Todd
Thompson, Lisa M.
Vanthof, John
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yakubski, John

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura
Anderson, Granville
Ballard, Chris
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Chan, Michael
Colle, Mike
Damerla, Dipika
Delaney, Bob
Dickson, Joe
Dong, Han

Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Hoggarth, Ann
Hunter, Miltzie
Kiwala, Sophie
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Marie-France
Malhi, Harinder
Mangat, Amrit
Martins, Cristina
McGarry, Kathryn

McMahon, Eleanor
Milczyn, Peter Z.
Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir
Potts, Arthur
Qaadri, Shafiq
Rinaldi, Lou
Sergio, Mario
Thibeault, Glenn
Wong, Soo

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 26; the nays are 30.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negatived.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Orders of the day.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Speaker, in the interest of the Blue Jays needing some more fans, I will move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Labour has moved adjournment of the House. Agreed?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

Mr. John Yakubski: On division.

Laughter.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This House stands adjourned until October 20, at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1619.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, William Short

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Anderson, Granville (LIB)	Durham	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Baker, Yvan (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Ballard, Chris (LIB)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
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Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	

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Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
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Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
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Laurie Scott, Daiene Vernile
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MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

National Family Week	
Ms. Sylvia Jones	5728
Healthy eating	
Ms. Sarah Campbell	5729
Ontario Agriculture Week	
Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris	5729
Hydro rates	
Mrs. Julia Munro	5729
Do Good Divas	
Mr. Percy Hatfield	5730
Aurora Seniors Association	
Mr. Chris Ballard	5730
PANDAS/PANS	
Mr. Robert Bailey	5730
Nation Leagues	
Mr. Mike Colle	5731
Taste of Streetsville	
Mr. Bob Delaney	5731

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES / RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS

Comité permanent de la justice / Standing Committee on Justice Policy	
M. Shafiq Qaadri	5731
Report adopted	5731

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Human Rights Code Amendment Act (Genetic Characteristics), 2015, Bill 129, Mr. Colle / Loi de 2015 modifiant le Code des droits de la personne (caractéristiques génétiques), projet de loi 129, M. Colle	
First reading agreed to	5731
Mr. Mike Colle	5732

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Student safety	
Mrs. Kathryn McGarry	5732
Ontario Retirement Pension Plan	
Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn	5732

Mental health and addiction services

Mr. Robert Bailey	5732
-------------------------	------

Privatization of public assets

Mr. Michael Mantha	5732
--------------------------	------

Lung health

Mrs. Cristina Martins	5732
-----------------------------	------

Taxation

Mr. Bill Walker	5733
-----------------------	------

Protection de l'environnement

M. Shafiq Qaadri	5733
------------------------	------

Missing persons

Ms. Cindy Forster	5733
-------------------------	------

Water fluoridation

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry	5734
----------------------------	------

By-election in Sudbury

Mrs. Gila Martow	5734
------------------------	------

Alzheimer's disease

Mr. Percy Hatfield	5734
--------------------------	------

Lung health

Ms. Harinder Malhi	5734
--------------------------	------

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS / AFFAIRES D'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC ÉMANANT DES DÉPUTÉS

Special Interest Groups Election Advertising

Transparency Act, 2015, Bill 96, Mr. Walker / Loi de 2015 sur la transparence de la publicité électorale des groupes d'intérêt particulier, projet de loi 96, M. Walker	
Mr. Bill Walker	5735
Ms. Cindy Forster	5737
Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti	5737
Mr. Patrick Brown	5738
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	5739
Mr. Arthur Potts	5740
Mr. Michael Harris	5741
Mr. Victor Fedeli	5742
Mr. Bill Walker	5742

Infrastructure program funding / Financement des infrastructures	
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	5743
Mr. Percy Hatfield	5745
Mr. Han Dong	5746
Mr. Ted Arnott	5747
Mr. Michael Mantha	5747
Mrs. Kathryn McGarry	5748
Mr. Michael Harris	5749
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	5750

**Agriculture and food literacy / Sensibilisation à
l'agriculture et aux produits agricoles**

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson.....	5751
Ms. Cindy Forster	5752
Mr. Granville Anderson.....	5753
Mr. Patrick Brown	5754
M. Michael Mantha	5755
Ms. Eleanor McMahon	5755
Mr. Toby Barrett.....	5756
Mr. John Vanthof.....	5757
Ms. Lisa M. Thompson.....	5758

**Special Interest Groups Election Advertising
Transparency Act, 2015, Bill 96, Mr. Walker / Loi
de 2015 sur la transparence de la publicité
électorale des groupes d'intérêt particulier, projet
de loi 96, M. Walker**

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon)	5758
---	------

**Infrastructure program funding / Financement des
infrastructures**

Motion agreed to.....	5758
-----------------------	------

**Agriculture and food literacy / Sensibilisation à
l'agriculture et aux produits agricoles**

Motion agreed to.....	5758
-----------------------	------

**Special Interest Groups Election Advertising
Transparency Act, 2015, Bill 96, Mr. Walker / Loi
de 2015 sur la transparence de la publicité
électorale des groupes d'intérêt particulier, projet
de loi 96, M. Walker**

Second reading negatived	5759
--------------------------------	------

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Thursday 8 October 2015 / Jeudi 8 octobre 2015

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Employment and Labour Statute Law Amendment Act, 2015, Bill 109, Mr. Flynn / Loi de 2015 modifiant des lois en ce qui concerne l'emploi et les relations de travail, projet de loi 109, M. Flynn	
Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn	5707
Mr. Mike Colle	5708
Mr. Ted Arnott	5710
Ms. Jennifer K. French	5711
Ms. Eleanor McMahon	5711
Mrs. Julia Munro	5711
Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn	5712
Mr. Ted Arnott	5712
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	5717

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman	5717
Hon. Tracy MacCharles	5717
Mr. John Yakabuski	5717
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	5717
Mr. Todd Smith	5717
Hon. James J. Bradley	5717
Mr. Jagmeet Singh	5718
Mr. Chris Ballard	5718
Mr. Lou Rinaldi	5718
Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti	5718
Ms. Sophie Kiwala	5718
Wearing of Toronto Blue Jays paraphernalia	
Mr. Michael Harris	5718

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Privatization of public assets	
Mr. Patrick Brown	5718
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	5718
Agriculture industry	
Mr. Patrick Brown	5719
Hon. Jeff Leal	5719
Privatization of public assets	
Ms. Andrea Horwath	5720
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	5720
International trade agreement	
Ms. Andrea Horwath	5721
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	5721

Domestic violence

Ms. Laurie Scott	5722
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	5722
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	5722

International trade agreement

Mr. Taras Natyshak	5722
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	5723

Youth services

Ms. Sophie Kiwala	5723
Hon. Tracy MacCharles	5723

Doctors' fees

Mrs. Gila Martow	5724
Hon. Eric Hoskins	5724

Child care

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky	5724
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	5725
Hon. Liz Sandals	5725

Pay equity

Ms. Soo Wong	5725
Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn	5725

Victims of crime

Mr. Norm Miller	5726
Hon. Madeleine Meilleur	5726

Services for the developmentally disabled

Ms. Andrea Horwath	5726
Hon. Tracy MacCharles	5726
Hon. Helena Jaczek	5727

Health care funding

Ms. Daiene Vernile	5727
Hon. Eric Hoskins	5727

Hospice care

Mr. Jim Wilson	5727
Hon. Eric Hoskins	5727

Legislative pages

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	5728
-------------------------------------	------

Use of electronic devices in House

Mr. Mike Colle	5728
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	5728

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	5728
Mr. Mike Colle	5728

Continued on inside back cover

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Tuesday 20 October 2015

Mardi 20 octobre 2015



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 20 October 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 20 octobre 2015

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

POLICE RECORD CHECKS REFORM ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LA RÉFORME DES VÉRIFICATIONS DE DOSSIERS DE POLICE

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 7, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 113, An Act respecting police record checks /
Projet de loi 113, Loi concernant les vérifications de
dossiers de police.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: It is my pleasure to speak to Bill 113 this morning, An Act respecting police record checks. I think everybody would agree that police record checks have multiplied exponentially over the years and that our administration, oversight and transparency of police record checks have not kept pace with that exponential growth. In effect, we don't even know how many police record checks are taking place or under what circumstances and what information is being provided. So this bill is a much needed and long overdue attempt to address some of the unknowns, the uncertainties and the failings of that system that we have at the present time.

Although Bill 113 does make a significant attempt and initiative to improve that system, there are some failings with the bill, in my view. I want to take a moment or two to illustrate to the members in this assembly what some of those failings are and what some of the criticisms are that I have on Bill 113, in hopes that you will take them with sincerity and consider these criticisms when it comes to committee and a further examination and evaluation of this bill.

First off, there are three clauses in Bill 113 which I think need to be seriously re-evaluated. The first one is section 22(1). I believe these next criticisms that I'm going to speak about are really about a significant undue delegation of authority by this assembly to individuals without the proper oversight. Section 22(1) allows cab-

inet to exempt anyone from any provision of this bill. Seldom do we see such broad powers being provided to cabinet to exempt any person or class of persons from any provision of this act. That could be done by order in council. The Legislature would not be aware of that exemption or who it applies to. That, clearly, is not in keeping with a transparent and open administration.

It goes on. Section 22(2)(c) allows the minister to create new offences under this act. There are offences enunciated and enumerated in this act. We can all look at them, evaluate them and debate them. But then the bill goes on to allow the minister to create new offences without legislative oversight. That's 22(2)(c). Both of those are serious and, I believe, undue delegations of authority.

Lastly—this, again, is one that I've never seen, and it speaks to our adherence, our convention and our knowledge that politicians ought not to interfere with the administration of justice or the prosecution. I'd like to ask everybody to take a look at section 19(3) of the act. Section 19(3) says, "A prosecution shall not be commenced under this section without the minister's consent." That is a worrying clause. If there is anybody here on the Liberal benches who can respond to these comments this morning, I would be very happy to hear what the rationale is behind these undue delegations of authority, specifically this one: Why will it be a requirement that the minister consents to any prosecution? No prosecution can go forward under this act without the minister's signed consent. We would never allow that, and we have never allowed that in any other statute before this House, that I'm aware of. None. It is a very, very troubling clause, especially when looked at in light of the previous two clauses that I spoke about. I do hope someone on the Liberal benches will respond to that.

Just think of it, under this act—as we know, police record checks are provided in large part by police services boards. There is a growing element of third-party providers as well, which I'll speak to later during this debate. But anybody who is not in compliance, anybody who provides improper disclosure, would generally be the police services board, as it now stands. A complainant, somebody who would be upset or found that their privacy was violated and improper disclosure was made, would, of course, have to go back to that police services board that they have the allegation against in the first place. And now, that individual, if the police services board refused to bring in information to the justice—first off, they would have to get the minister's consent to bring a charge against themselves.

0910

Second off, if an individual wanted to lay a private information with the courts to proceed with that allegation, he wouldn't be allowed to enter a private information. He would not be allowed to go to the courts to seek recourse or remedy; he would have to first go to the minister, and we know how easy that is. We know how easy it is for any individual to approach a government minister and get his or her consent before he or she puts a private information forward. That cannot be allowed to stand, in my view—cannot be allowed.

During committee hearings—because obviously this bill will pass; it's a government bill, and it will pass. But we cannot turn our administration of justice into such an animal that requires the minister's approval prior to any laying of charges under this act.

Those are the three most serious concerns that I have on this bill that I am absolutely confident to assert need to be remedied. But another important part of this is the requirement for the providers of police record checks to compile, record and document statistics, which is a great thing because we don't have any—or we have very few—statistics at the present time. That's a good step in the right direction. However, the act does not identify which statistics are to be recorded and documented. We don't know how many applications will be recorded. We don't know, if there are any refusals to disclose, if they are going to be recorded. We don't know if the duration or length of time to comply with a background check is going to be incorporated into those statistics.

I see the Attorney General. I would love the Attorney General to take a look with a fine-tooth comb at some of these comments I'm making on this bill and provide this House with some level of assurance that the right and appropriate and relevant statistics are going to be recorded. They should be enumerated within the legislation so that we know, and so we also know, then, that it becomes a requirement of the provider to provide that information.

One more element on that topic specifically is that this act is to be reviewed by the minister after five years. That is section 21, and it says, "The minister shall conduct a review of this act within five years after the day this section comes into force." But again, in the interest of transparency—and democracy demands transparency—that clause ought to include "and table his or her review with this assembly," so that we can all examine and evaluate the review. We can then examine and evaluate the statistics that have been collected, and we can then move forward in an informed and intelligent fashion about the effectiveness of Bill 113.

I think that's an important consideration. It's just not good enough for the minister to review the bill after five years and be silent or have no obligation or duty to inform the House of his or her review. That would strengthen it. I think it would also be consistent with the Premier's assertions that she wants to be the most open and transparent of all governments. You can't be open and transparent if there's no requirement to table reviews, investigations and evaluations with the House.

I want to put this forward for the minister's consideration: The enforcement of this act is in a very murky and muddled area, in my view. As I identified, anybody who has a complaint under this act is most likely to go to the police services board, who provided that disclosure. That individual is, in essence, prevented from seeking remedy in the courts for any improper disclosure. This is not just the police services board; it could also be a not-for-profit, a charitable organization or anybody else who inappropriately seeks background police record checks on an individual. Again, prosecution is dependent on the minister exercising his authorities under this act to allow a prosecution to go forward.

I think the bill would be far more substantive, complete and effective for the people of Ontario if there was an independent body that was authorized to be the enforcement and compliance agency for this legislation. I can think of groups such as the OIPRD. The independent police review might be an effective and appropriate organization for allegations or complaints under this act to be brought forward, just as we do today. If a police officer is alleged to have been engaged in improper use of force or misconduct, individuals have the opportunity to go to the OIPRD. The same could apply with this legislation. There are other avenues; the SIU, I guess, could be another one.

Right at the moment, we've created a real juggernaut for individuals, when this act gets passed, that will have statute to protect their privacy, will have statutory authority to indicate how it is to be done, but there will be no remedy for failure to perform to the standards that this act sets forward. I think those are important clauses for the government to re-examine.

At least, in the minimum, I think there is a duty to this House that the government provide us with the rationale and an explanation of why we have this tremendous undue delegation of authority and this complete contradiction to the separation of our courts and separation of our law enforcement from the political arm of government.

I know the Liberal members will have two minutes to respond. If anybody there could respond as to why it is that the minister must consent to a prosecution under this bill—I know the attorney general is here. Can you imagine, if every time a police officer goes to lay a charge, instead of going to the crown attorney and seeking advice in the laying of the charges, the police officer would have to go to the Minister of the Attorney General and get her consent before a charge is laid. Absolutely astonishing—I don't understand how that can be viewed as an appropriate clause.

0920

So once again, table the review. After five years, after the government has reviewed, examined and evaluated the efficacy of Bill 113, table that review with the House so that we can all see it.

Second, consider that enforcement and compliance be done by a separate agency, not this less-than-clear view that we see now, and certainly without the need for the minister's consent for any prosecution.

Also, enumerate the statistics and the data that are to be collected so that we can all understand. I would think the minister would want this as well. How can the minister review an act in five years' time if it's not enumerated what data is going to be collected and how it's going to be documented and who is going to have access to it?

Finally, that cabinet can exempt any person or any class of persons from any provision of this bill: I always grew up and understood that neither prince nor pauper is above or beneath the law, that we have a general application of the law that affects everyone. Why we would give this authority to cabinet to exempt anybody or any class of people from any provision of this bill without coming back to this House and seeking our consent is unacceptable, as well as section 22(2), where the minister can create new offences by regulation without coming back to this House seeking our consent.

With that, Speaker, I'm looking forward to other members in the House responding to those concerns and looking forward to getting a handle on police record checks. I'll finish off with this one statement—I think it's important—from the civil liberties: "The bottom line is that widespread, unnecessary police record checks do not contribute to public safety; they undermine it."

I think it's important that we get a handle on them and we do these police record checks properly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: It's always great to get up and respond when a member is debating in the House.

I just want to focus in on two areas of this bill, though. The member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington actually spoke about this general application piece and the ability for cabinet to exempt certain classifications or individuals. In my experience in the health care field, there certainly have been a couple of issues while I was working there. One was the length of time it actually took to get police checks. We would have 100 vacancies, for example, in a large health system in Niagara, with nurses waiting to get a job, so their employment was impacted. Sometimes it could take eight, nine, 10 weeks to actually get a police check, so not good for patient care when you are actually working short in our health care facilities.

I'm not saying that it's a bad thing to do police checks in a sector where we are dealing with a lot of vulnerable patients, but there needs to be a way—if the government is going to put in new regulations, then it needs to put the resources in place as well to be able to actually accomplish those checks in a timely way.

The second piece was also in the health care sector. You could have a nurse who had practised faithfully for 40 years, retires, decides to come back and work casual in the health care field, and suddenly now requires a police check, after having practised for 40 years without any issues whatsoever, reporting to their respective college—nothing on their college record. Suddenly, they too have to go and get a police check, and they have to stand in line and wait for that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and good morning. Thank you very much for this opportunity to speak in support of Bill 113.

I'm very, very pleased to support our bill, the government bill. I listened very attentively to the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington and to my colleague from Welland. Some of the suggestions and comments he made will also be heard when we go to committees and hearings. But I want to bring the member's comments forward. He focused specifically on enforcement and the role of the minister, the cabinet minister. I heard you, but I think the member opposite also has to recognize that this particular proposed legislation has been heard from various stakeholders as well. I know every member of this House needs to recognize that we need to balance public safety and respecting privacy.

This past week we had a constit week, and I spent much of my constit week dealing with the issue of police background checks. One issue—we have been very, very clear that when constituents need to go to work, as well as in a volunteer capacity, because every child who graduates from Ontario's system must do 40 hours of volunteer work—we know that. They may be asked to do a police background check. I had to be dealing with this all last week with respect to this particular area. We now have kids who are 14 or 15 years of age being asked to do a police background check. It is absolutely important that we make sure we have a balance between public protection and safety, and respecting and protecting privacy, because at the end of the day, there have been records shared—especially mental health—that affect careers, but, more importantly, employment opportunity and also travelling. We've seen all that. It is a concern, and I know the government is prepared to repair that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions or comments? The member for Leeds-Grenville and official opposition House leader.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thanks very much, Speaker.

Interjection: Deputy leader.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Deputy leader; I apologize.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you for your kind words, Speaker. I appreciate that.

I just want to thank the member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington for his comments. I think his speech this morning was very well thought out. I was disappointed that the members opposite haven't addressed some of his concerns. I think he was pretty clear that subsection 19(3):

"No prosecution without consent

"(3) A prosecution shall not be commenced under this section without the minister's consent"—I agree with him. I think, before this bill gets to committee, one of you has to stand up and address that. Why is that in that section?

As well, I want to commend the member. Over and over again, he talks about the fact that—not just with this

bill, but with many other bills—we're taking our responsibility as members of the Legislative Assembly and we're allowing the minister to deal with it. To have a review by the minister five years after this bill is proclaimed and not bring it back for a debate or discussion on the floor of this House—I can't believe that we allow that to happen time after time after time. We need to make sure that we have meaningful debate, discussion and evaluation after this bill becomes law.

I also feel that we should get the government to address some of his concerns about enforcement and compliance. I think he makes some very valid comments about the agency and that review process.

I do, just before I sit down, want to give credit, again, to my colleague the member for Dufferin—Caledon. She has a bill, Bill 79, the Helping Volunteers Give Back Act, that I think would make an exceptional amendment. It would require that volunteers would not have to get multiple background checks. I think it's a good bill. I'm going to put it on the record again that I think it should be an amendment to this act.

Thank you, Speaker, and I want to congratulate Mr. Hillier on a fine speech this morning.

0930

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions or comments.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to rise in this House and, today, talk on Bill 113, An Act respecting police record checks. I don't think anyone is arguing that we don't have to improve this situation, when volunteers want to volunteer, good people want to volunteer, and information comes up for something for which they have never been charged, never been convicted, and yet it could impact how they want to help the community.

I think we support the principle of this bill, but I would also, although I disagree with him on many political issues, like to commend the member from Lanark—Frontenac—that's a longer name than my riding, Speaker—Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington. As I was listening, and I listened attentively, and I don't have a long history here, but it did strike me as passing strange—a phrase I haven't heard in a while—that the minister would have to approve if there was a prosecution.

In the body of the bill—it hasn't been mentioned yet—even the minister's method of approval seems a bit odd. Subsection 19(4), the minister's proof of consent: "The production of a document that appears to show that the minister has consented to a prosecution under this section is admissible as evidence of the minister's consent." Even that is kind of murky. This is a bill about getting away from the murkiness of police record checks, and, instead, while they're trying to do a good thing, they're making it even more murky. This has to be fixed as this bill goes to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. The member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I want to thank all the members who commented. I am a little bit disappointed that the member from Scarborough from the Liberal benches did not respond to any of my comments about why. Obviously, she is just willing to accept that some smart people that they listened to said they should do the bill like this. That's not good enough when you're in what appears to be contravention of our conventions and traditions, and contrary to even the spirit and the essence of due process and the rule of law. We need more than "I've listened to some smart people, and they said it was all okay."

I didn't speak about the delays, but it was brought up in the comments of the member from Welland. I could have gone on for 20 minutes, easily, just on the number of constituents who have come to my office who have lost job opportunities because of delays in getting their background checks done. That's why I was focusing on this review and the enumerating of the statistics. If we don't know what statistics we're going to demand, we have no way of ensuring the accountability; there's no way for us to help our constituents or be able to save them down the road.

"We've made it better"? We don't know. There are hundreds, thousands, millions possibly, of these background checks going on. We all hear of the tremendous delays that can occur, and also lost files and all kinds of things that have a consequence to our constituents. Oftentimes they lose either some period of work or lose out on job opportunities altogether. I do hope the Liberal members rise to the occasion and make this bill better.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I want to thank the member for his presentation this morning.

Further debate.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It is always my honour to stand and speak on behalf of the residents of my riding of London—Fanshawe on this bill today, Bill 113, An Act respecting police record checks.

Last week, the NDP critic, my colleague from Bramalea—Gore—Malton, commended the government on introducing this bill. We've heard positive responses from members on this side of the House that this initiative is definitely something that is long overdue. There have been contradiction, and conflict, on this issue when people are looking for background checks and sometimes what results come out, and there are limited opportunities because of the information that is presented.

I want to echo some concerns that the member for Bramalea—Gore—Malton has also presented. Several organizations, as well as people from across this province, may have the same concerns as well. There are some very good aspects to those bills, so first I want to start with those.

The bill indicates that non-conviction information about an individual will not be disclosed in response to a police record check, in response to a criminal check or a judicial matters check. This section is imperative because there are cases when non-convictions actually appear as

part of a police check, and they restrict, as we mentioned before, volunteering and employment.

My colleague from Bramalea–Gore–Malton highlights some of these facts, but I think they're well worth repeating so that members of Legislature really understand the impact of what's happening with this bill. It is a good bill, but we can't forget that our job is to be very critical of what's in the bill so that we can make improvements and offer suggestions to the government.

What exactly are non-conviction records? These involve, according to the John Howard Society, calls to 911 for assistance, victimization, mental health crises involving the police, being questioned by the police, and arrests and charges that did not result in convictions. Another thing that some people may not realize in this bill is that if you were a witness to a crime or just a witness in some kind of incident and the police spoke to you, you could have that on your record. If you get a check done, that will appear just because you were questioned. Most people don't even realize that that's something that can come up on a background check for them.

The examples that we've been talking about today are on mental health. I presented a bill in this House, Bill 95, a mental health and addictions bill, which helps people who are experiencing mental health issues and addiction have a better opportunity for access to those services.

Right now, many health care treatments, programs or therapies are in the community. We all know that those things belong in the community. That's what patients want, but we also need to have the resources and the management of those therapies and treatments that are out in the community to be implemented so that patients have access to those things in a timely fashion.

What I think I can say from what has been going on in London is that the police services have contact—I've talked to the police chief. Once a year, I contact him to get an update on what's going on, and each year he expresses to me that a disproportionate amount of their emergency 911 calls are coming from mental health patients—mental health issues.

What has happened there is that people are not able to access mental health. They've gone to the hospital or to other areas or organizations and there's a backlog. They are confused on where to go. So their mental health illness continues longer than really they need it to, perhaps, because they haven't been able to seek assistance. Then they reach a crisis point where they don't know where else to turn. What they do is they call 911. The police respond. There are incidents where perhaps things are said of a violent nature. So the police will write the report. In that case, there is a record of that incident. It may have been a result of the person coming to a boiling point where they couldn't access health care in the time that they needed it and now they're at a crisis point. That's a really, really unfortunate status of events, when someone who's in a vulnerable position ends up with a record check because of other reasons—they couldn't access health in a timely fashion—therefore limiting

opportunities such as employment, education, as well as even rental homes, insurance and volunteering.

0940

I have had a couple of examples, as we all have had, of constituents calling my office, and the examples that they have articulated are very real effects in their life that have disadvantaged them. One person applied for funding through the MTCU, and they just had fines, apparently, on their record which were years and years old. They made arrangements to pay those fines, but then they were told it was going to take at least—again, the length of time—five months for that to come off their record.

There are many opportunities that have gone by for people in the London–Fanshawe area where they are trying to get funding for a second career, and they may have this situation where there's a fine and now they've got to wait five months. That affects which career choice you're going to make. It is something that we need to address. We need to make sure that record checks that don't include criminal behaviour or criminal convictions are not part of this equation.

The member from Scarborough–Agincourt talked about high school students doing their 40 hours of volunteer work in order to graduate with their diploma. Speaker, I can tell you that's something that is a concern as well. I was talking to a staff member just recently in the legislative building about this particular issue. My concern, when I read through the bill, was that if you're going to submit an application or your name to an organization where you want to volunteer, and they say to you, "Mrs. Smith, you need to obtain a records check," and you say, "Sure, no problem"—as far as they know, they have nothing on their record, so they go to the police and they ask for a police records check. The police records check then comes back—and one good thing in this bill is you have to give consent. I applaud the government for putting consent in this bill so the person who is applying for any position realizes that is actually happening. They give consent for that. So they go to the police station, they get their records check back, they get called by the police, they go in and they see their records check. Lo and behold, there's "I'm a witness to an event." There's really nothing that prevents them from becoming a volunteer or getting a job. But in this particular incident, where the high school student that the member from Scarborough–Agincourt was talking about—there's an example: The high school student was a witness to an incident. Prior to this act—that's what I want to clarify—that records check was taken by the person who was ordered to get the records check and given to that organization. There's a problem with that. I think that's flawed. That records check should not be a document that you pass on to a third party. All kinds of questions are raised in that respect. What happens to that records check? What kind of privacy and confidentiality practices does that organization have? That organization can have good intentions, because a lot of not-for-profit organizations do have good intentions. But even though it's an innocent example of a records check piece of information

that can come out on a records check for someone, it shouldn't be public knowledge to anyone but the police and the person ordering it.

This is where we're talking about the high school student. High school students may not question the process. This is where information shouldn't be out there without proper checks and balances before it's released. I don't even agree with the fact that it should be released to a third party. I think it should be between the police and the person ordering it, and if there is a concern, then the organization is called and told there's a concern. They don't need to know what kind of concern or what the context of it is. That's all they need to know. Or even better, the person who is getting the records check can identify if that is going to be a concern to the organization or not-for-profit where they are applying for a job and they can just say, "You know, I've decided I'm not pursuing that opportunity." Then that leaves it so that they don't have to actually say, "There's something on my records check and I'm not willing to volunteer," or "I'm prevented from volunteering." That's another reason why it should go no further than the person ordering the records check.

I'd like to know, and I guess I'll have to enquire about this and I'm going to ask the government: Is that in place, where once that records check is ordered, it doesn't go any further than the person ordering it? If there's a concern, it's either the police say there is a concern or not a concern, and no one needs to know what the context is of that. I'd like to know what happens at that point, because right now, my understanding is—and I've had calls in my office—the practice is the organization gets a copy of that.

Another example I had in my office, Speaker: A young man was wrongfully accused of a crime, went through the terrible experience of being put through the court system, and then he was acquitted. That was on his records check. His parents called, thoroughly upset, just devastated that their son's future was going to be affected because of this record information on there. Again, the son was applying, a young man, and he was told it was going to take five months for that records check to be corrected. So even when you have the expunging or the pardon on things, it can become a serious issue.

The last example: A student in our area was applying for the nursing program, as the member from Welland talked about. She wanted to become a health care provider. Many, many years ago she experienced—this is an illness. Mental health is an illness. We've got to get away from the stigma of mental health. People have an illness, they have a mental health concern; they seek help, they get medication and they can get better. They do get better and they're very functioning citizens in our society.

The student had a situation where she wasn't feeling well. Police were involved. Again, phrases were expressed that were of a violent nature and she couldn't get into the course because it's a requirement to have a records check in order to get your co-op experience.

That was really devastating for that student. She wrote a wonderful piece to us, an email, explaining how she did have a difficult time in her life as a young woman, experienced some stressful situations in her life that were out of her hands, that affected her inadvertently, and therefore she had some mental health issues, and she's not denying that. Identifying that you have mental health issues and seeking help is wonderful, because it is an illness, a mental health issue, and should be treated as such.

Now she's gotten better. She's healthy and she wants to pursue her career in nursing, and she was stopped.

I definitely think that looking at non-criminal offences is a huge piece of the positive nature of this bill. It's going to help a lot of people in functioning in life in many ways.

I want to talk about my mental health bill again, and the reason I want to do that is because Bill 95 is affecting so many people when it comes to issues, even housing. When you go to get a home, people are discriminated against when they have mental health issues. Having Bill 95 pass through committee—it's gone to committee, but bringing it to committee for debate and for people to present—I think would help people access mental health and give them a little bit of hope that they can move on with their life.

I was at a poverty seminar this weekend and there were different aspects to poverty: homelessness, as we all know; health care is another, accessing health care. There was also food stability. That was important. Food security, that was important. We talked about those different aspects of it.

The other one, of course, was jobs. The precarious work that's happening, the contract work that's happening—people don't have benefits. When you don't have benefits and you're working in a stressful situation and you don't know if your job is going to be there for a few years to come, sometimes that adds stress to mental health. You don't have benefits, so you can't even access services. It all ties in: precarious work, food security, homelessness and health care. I think passing Bill 95 would be a positive step to addressing some of those issues that I talked about and that we had a discussion about in a seminar this weekend.

0950

I also went to an event last week in my riding: international World Homeless Day. We were at the London InterCommunity Health Centre and we were talking to a gentleman who has been working with homelessness issues and people experiencing homelessness for about 26 years. The question was posed to him, "What do you think the main cause of homelessness is?" You know what he said, Speaker—which is actually quite surprising, because there are an accumulation of reasons why people end up homeless. He said it was poverty. Poverty is the number one factor of homelessness. You can have mental health, you can have all kinds of other issues, but if you don't have the means to afford a home, to buy—

Ms. Cindy Forster: Drugs.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Yes—to buy the medication you need, to buy the food that you need—at this poverty seminar, we heard a real case example of two people. This woman came from out west. She came to London. She was promised a contract position that fell through. She had to wait five months until her unemployment insurance kicked in. She ended up in a situation where she was homeless. She is still struggling to get out of that. It affected her self-esteem and her confidence. It was a true-to-life story.

I think the face of poverty has changed. It's not just the stigma that people have, the stereotype that people have perpetuated in their mind. Poverty can hit any one of us when there is illness in the family or you lose your job.

Typing that in, unfortunate situations that occur when someone has interaction with police when they're not criminal need to be addressed. Having this bill at least is a good step forward into looking at non-conviction, non-criminal records check information that will help people with those employment and volunteer situations that we talked about.

I did want to mention a comment by the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington. He is correct in saying that the powers that the minister is being given under this bill with regard to determining whether prosecution is going to be admissible in this situation when someone does commit an offence—when an organization wilfully contravenes this act, there's a fine of \$5,000. That is concerning because the powers given to the government, whether or not they decide the law has been broken, are in question. Definitely, we want to talk about that a little further, even examine it in committee.

Being in that process when it does go to committee, I'd really be interested, even if I'm not assigned to that committee, to sit in and listen because, in many ways, this touches all of us. We can have unfortunate situations where we are involved with the police, whether it's health care, whether it's being a witness, whether it's fines or whether it's being falsely accused of something. It needs to be addressed.

This is a very serious bill; I'm glad it's being talked about. I'm glad we're looking at it in the intent that it's meant to help people with non-conviction criminal offences on their records check.

Thank you for the opportunity to talk to this bill. I look forward to questions and comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Good morning. I would just like to add a few comments and respond to the member on the opposite side. I'll just go back to my speaking notes and the opening remarks made between the minister and myself as the PA. It says that this legislation, if passed, will establish and standardize three types of record checks, as follows: a criminal record check, which is where only criminal records will be released; a criminal record and judicial matters check, which is pretty straightforward; and I think the one that the member

across the way expressed, a vulnerable sector records check.

I would like to assure her, because the minister quite clearly stated—I will read his exact words. It says, "Quite simply, a police record check should never disclose personal health information or identify that someone was a victim or witness to a crime." She was outlining someone having a problem before; they had a mental health situation and their information was revealed. Clearly, what we've put in this legislation will stop that from happening in the future.

The other issue that she raised was someone trying to seek employment or volunteering. The legislation is very clear, and the Hansard would have it very clear that the minister made it very clear that in the vulnerable record check, the person that is being checked receives a copy of the record, has an opportunity to ask for a review and, based on those circumstances, that person can clearly state, "I'm not interested in the job I'm applying for and, therefore, do not proceed to send my record check to the particular employment opportunity" or agency or whatever. It's clearly in the minister's speech and it's clearly in the legislation.

Basically, the rest of it, I would say that the member supports the legislation, so let us all support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Dufferin-Caledon and deputy leader of the official opposition.

Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to rise to comment on the member from London-Fanshawe's 20-minute speech on Bill 113.

You might appreciate that I have a personal interest in Bill 113, not because I ask for a lot of personal police record checks, but because I know a lot of people in my community, and I'm sure we all do, that spend a great deal of their time volunteering for organizations and community groups throughout Ontario. There is an opportunity in Bill 113 to improve that process and make it easier for people to volunteer. So I will once again put in a plug for one section of the bill that specifically references that individuals have the opportunity to review their police record check information before deciding to release it to the requester i.e. an employer or volunteer organization.

I would like to suggest that we add an amendment to that and say allow that police record check, once it has been provided and reviewed by the individual, to multiple volunteer organizations. We all know that people who volunteer tend to volunteer in more than one organization—on behalf of more than one organization. This will simplify the process so that that mom or dad who is reading in their child's school can take that same police record check and volunteer for the local Big Brothers Big Sisters and volunteer for the local organization that has an event once a year. The process of getting a police record check for a one-time event is too onerous and too time consuming. That's the amendment I'd like to see in Bill 113, and then I'd be proud to support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'm glad the member from London—Fanshawe had the opportunity to really zone in on the whole mental health piece, because I believe that police checks probably disproportionately affect people with mental health issues. Many times, people with mental health issues, during a 911 call, for example, or a call from their family, are combative. They can be combative. They're off their medications. They're not really in control of themselves initially. In many cases, I've seen them being charged by the police. They're initially charged with either assaulting police or resisting arrest because the police—they're not necessarily known to the police. That record follows them for the rest of their lives. Many times, people with mental health issues don't have continuity in the workforce, and so volunteering is an opportunity for them to actually gain those skills that they need to perhaps get into the workforce when they have been able to successfully access mental health treatment.

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But mental health is sorely underfunded in this province and across Canada. The services are just not out there and available. Every day I have parents, of teenagers in particular, coming into my office trying to access even an initial assessment for their child, let alone any psychotherapy which would assist these teenagers.

To have something like this on a record following a 15-year-old or a 16-year-old for the rest of their lives really is discriminatory in my view, and so we need to do what we can do to fix this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one more question and comment.

Mr. Granville Anderson: I'm very proud to speak to this bill. I thank the member from Welland and all of the members that have spoken prior to her.

It is one of those things—I have had several police record checks during my time. As a school board trustee, I had to go through a police record check. As a baseball coach, I did the same. It was a benefit to me—I have been stopped by the police on several occasions for driving infractions at times and that didn't appear on the record during that time that I was known to police. That would have prohibited my progress and maybe I wouldn't even be in this House today.

So although there is a value in police record checks in protecting civil liberty, we also have to be mindful that it can restrict a person to gain employment; it can be a black mark for a person going forward, whether it is to college or to university and so forth.

It's a good bill. It's a bill that provides a balance—a balance that protects civil liberties and also protects the vulnerable sector, as children and elderly folks have to be protected and we have to ensure those protections are in place. But at the same time, we have to value the liberty and the freedom we have in a democratic society for people to move about freely and to take part in the democratic process without the impediment of a police record check standing in the way for something that was not criminal—they were just pulled over perchance, for whatever reason.

Again, I support this bill wholeheartedly. It's a step in the right direction.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. I return to the member from London—Fanshawe for her reply.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you, Speaker. And thank you to the members that gave the questions and comments.

I do appreciate the fact that things are changing under this bill, but the reason we're here is to give—I had given a little bit of background as to the barriers and blocks that people have found before this bill came into effect, so it's good to see that this bill is a positive step in changing those things.

The reason this bill has been presented is because it's been far too long that many of us who have known people or have received calls in our constituency offices know that there is a need for this bill. People have been needlessly prevented from opportunities for their future, to get on with their lives.

So I'll have to say, I congratulate the government for coming up with this bill because there was a need and they are trying to meet that need. Yes, I think there is still room for improvement and the reason being is because when the legislation is presented in this House, my thought is that it should be scrutinized the most that we can right now. Once it gets released, we don't want it coming back where people have been negatively affected because we haven't looked at all the pieces that we can to make sure that each part of this bill is going to help people and not adversely affect them.

In committee, I hope that when presenters come through, they look at each part of this bill and give feedback, and that the government listens if there are ways to improve upon what they've presented.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there have been more than six and one half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader or his designate specifies otherwise.

I recognize the Minister of Northern Development.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: The government wishes to continue the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: Thank you, Speaker. I wanted to let you know that I'll be sharing my time with the member for Burlington and the member for Eglinton—Lawrence.

It gives me great pleasure to rise today on behalf of the Cambridge constituencies. I know that they will join me in thanking Gary Goodyear for his years of service to our community in Cambridge. They're also with me in congratulating Bryan May, our new MP for Cambridge.

This recent election actually relates to what I wanted to say this morning, Mr. Speaker. In the final days leading up to the election, there was a lot of excitement. I

certainly was excited to see all parts of the campaign from the federal standpoint. But in particular, in the final days of the election in Cambridge, there were more and more social media postings from folks, I'm sure in the heat of the moment, really without recognizing that tampering with elections signs is an infraction of the Canada Elections Act. There were a lot of issues regarding election signs in our area: things that were posted on YouTube, things that were posted on media, sometimes showing the individuals who were involved in doing things—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm sorry to interrupt, but of course we're dealing with police record checks, with Bill 113. I would ask the member to bring her comments back to the bill.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: Thank you. I was bringing this back to it, because what we were talking about was looking at police records checks for the future. When I looked at some of the material on social media that was coming in in the last couple of days of the election, I noted there were several young people who were involved in this, too. It would be a real shame for them if, in the future, they were going to be penalized under a record check because in the heat of the moment, they didn't recognize that things were going on that they shouldn't have been doing.

In Waterloo region, we have the crime prevention council, which is really a basis for how I perceive the community: the community policing, the focus on youth in our area by members of all parts of the community, representing education, youth organizations and senior organizations.

We have a very strong relationship with policing in our area, and I know that they are very supportive of having the new legislation here. It builds on the LEARN guidelines that were developed by policing, civil liberties, mental health organizations, community safety organizations, non-profits and business partners, and is also being followed by approximately 70% of police forces across the province. This will ensure a very consistent approach across Ontario, from the OPP to the smallest police force.

I wanted to reiterate again that those who have done things in the heat of the moment, especially our youth, may face unnecessary barriers to employment in the future due to inappropriate non-conviction and non-criminal information, such as mental health records being disclosed during routine police record checks or any of the other situations that we've been talking about. Many of these individuals had schooling and careers placed in jeopardy because of inappropriate use of police records checks. In some cases, they lost out on employment and other important opportunities. That's precisely why I support this legislation: to make sure that those folks in our community of Cambridge are protected from inappropriate uses.

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We've heard from all our partners, certainly at the crime prevention council table, as well as in my office in the last little while, again dealing with some of the youth

who are having to deal with some of the police record checks that have shown up with inappropriate behaviour, often due to their age.

There's a need for consistent practices and policies across this province. So, if passed, this legislation would help remove those unnecessary barriers and increase employment, volunteer and education opportunities. It will prohibit the release of non-criminal information such as mental health records, and it will strictly limit the release of non-conviction records.

I think that this goes a long way to protecting the members in my community and, indeed, the youth across Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm pleased to recognize the member for Burlington.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I'm pleased to rise in the House this morning to speak to this very important piece of legislation and join my colleagues from across the aisle, and the member for Cambridge and her eloquent remarks this morning—and, if the House will indulge me, say a note of congratulations to Karina Gould, the new MP-elect for Burlington, and thank Mike Wallace, the former member for Burlington, for his many years of service to our community as the federal member.

I think that's incredibly important. This is an extraordinary opportunity that we have on all sides of the House. I must say I'm enjoying the conversation and the debate today because, precisely, it focuses on the tenets of fairness and the judicious application of information that falls into police hands.

I'm proud to be part of the police family. My late husband was a police officer. I know the serious way in which he took police record checks. Quite often at the detachment, he would be there and someone would come in for a criminal record check. This would often be someone who was volunteering in their community.

We all know how we value our volunteers, so it's important that we take a look at the law and how it's applied, and make sure it's applied fairly and judiciously, and that that doesn't create any kind of barrier to people in our communities who want to put their names forward. Certainly, if information is found that is inappropriate, that will be acted upon, but it's very important that we take great care. This legislation will avoid precisely the kind of release of non-conviction and mental health information that my colleague from Cambridge mentioned. That can be debilitating and often damaging in an unnecessary way.

I'm proud that our government has introduced the Police Record Checks Reform Act. It would develop the province's first-ever clear, consistent and comprehensive framework for how police record checks are conducted in Ontario. It was developed in a multi-stakeholder environment after significant consultation. It is a response to the public, who have said that they want that judicious application. It ensures public safety while respecting privacy. It targets that delicate balance between the release of inappropriate information and the adjudication of our public judicial process, both of which are incredibly

important. It is based on the principles of fairness, to ensure the appropriate use of police record checks.

We've heard from many Ontarians who have faced unnecessary barriers due to inappropriate non-conviction and non-criminal information, such as mental health records, being disclosed during routine police record checks. Many of these individuals had schooling and careers placed in jeopardy because of this and, in some cases, lost out on employment and other important opportunities.

I was reading, when I was getting ready for my remarks this morning, about a gentleman in Sudbury who inadvertently found himself in a difficult situation in a traffic case where he leaned over, to quiet his young child in the back, took his gaze away from the road, and gently placed his hand on his child's knee. That was a case where the accusation landed him in trouble and prevented him from pursuing the kinds of career opportunities that he might have. It's precisely cases like this that we want to avoid.

We've also heard from our partner stakeholders in police services, businesses and volunteer organizations that there's a need for consistent practices and policies across our province.

Again, this legislation would help remove those unnecessary barriers and increase employment, volunteer and education opportunities. It does it by prohibiting the release of non-criminal information such as mental health records and strictly limiting the release of non-conviction records.

We're also establishing a specific test to ensure that all necessary information is provided in vulnerable sector checks so that those who need it most, like our children and seniors, continue to be protected. That speaks to the delicate balance that's achieved between protection and guarding the law.

Again, I invite all members of the House to speak to this bill and support it. It's an important step forward in our province. Thank you very much.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. It being 10:15 of the clock, this House stands in recess until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Today we have a new legislative page from Oakville: Julia Empey. On the very first day, Julia's father, Brian Empey, is here, and her grandmother Joyce Smith. They're joining us today for question period. Please give them a warm Queen's Park welcome.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'd like to welcome Alex Gill, executive director of ONEIA; Grant Walsom, XCG consulting and ONEIA vice-chair; and Marc Chabot, CH2M and chair of Environment Industry Day 2015.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: We're going to be joined very shortly by members from OASIS, the Ontario Agencies

Supporting Individuals With Special Needs. We will be joined by Michelle Marshall, executive director; David Barber, the current president; and Ann Kenney, the incoming president. They will be hosting a reception today from 5 to 7 p.m. in room 230.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I want to introduce the new page captain, Nicole Haim, from my riding. Her mother is here, Karine Benzacar; her brother Max Haim; and her grandmother Vivian Benzacar. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my pleasure as well to welcome Alex Gill, executive director of the Ontario Environment Industry Association; and Grant Walsom and Marc Chabot, the chair of Environment Industry Day, which we're going to be recognizing here in the Legislature.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: On behalf of the member from Halton, I want to welcome page Julia Empey's father, Brian Empey, and grandmother Joyce Empey. They are in the members' gallery today, and we welcome them to Queen's Park.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'd like to welcome Isa Topbas. He has joined my office through the Ontario Legislative Intern Programme.

Miss Monique Taylor: On behalf of my seatmate, the member from Essex, I would like to congratulate our page captain today, Marco Di Laudo, and welcome his father, Dino Di Laudo, to the Legislature today. Welcome.

Mr. John Fraser: I would like to welcome a constituent and friend, Chris Farley Ratcliffe, who's here this morning. He's familiar with the building, having worked for the Minister of Health for a number of years. Good morning and welcome, Chris.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Earlier this morning, I had the pleasure of meeting with Mark Vanderheyden, RWDI; Craig Stainton from the Ontario Ground Water Association; and Ellen McGregor of Fielding Chemical Technologies. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's my pleasure to introduce our new OLIP intern in my office, Matthew Banninga. Pleased to have you.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: As you know, this is national Waste Reduction Week. On the occasion of the Ontario Environment Industry Association reception day, we have Alex Gill, the executive director of ONEIA; Grant Walsom from XCG consulting and their vice-chair; and Marc Chabot from CH2M HILL. The reception, Mr. Speaker, for all members—I hope you'll attend—is between 5 and 7 this evening in the legislative dining room.

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a group of residents coming from Scarborough—Agincourt, from the Centre for Immigrant and Community Services, better known as CICS. They'll be coming in shortly.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Today with us in the Speaker's gallery, I would ask that the members please join me in welcoming a visiting member of the American Society of Legislative Clerks and Secretaries, who is on attachment this week to our assembly: the

chief clerk to the secretary of the Senate at the Alabama Senate, Ms. Joyce Wright. Welcome, Joyce.

Just before we move into question period, I would refer to this morning. This morning, there was a little bit of back and forth in a friendly way. I'm going to provide you with a little bit of a first part of the question time, and I won't steal it from you, to give your thanks to those individuals who represented us at the federal election. So give yourself a little bit of time to say your piece, and I won't steal the time from your question period, but I will ask you to move on.

It's now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HYDRO RATES

Mr. John Yakabuski: I would, too, at this time, on behalf our leader, Patrick Brown, and the PC caucus, like to offer our congratulations to Prime Minister-elect Justin Trudeau on his victory last night. We wish him the very best in governing Canada.

I would also like to congratulate Thomas Mulcair and Prime Minister Harper for their campaigns, and thank Stephen Harper for his 10-year service to Canada.

To the Minister of Energy: For years now, we in the opposition have warned about the dire consequences due to the government's reckless handling of the energy system. Families and businesses cannot afford Liberal energy policies, yet the government continues to go down the same path. Last week, those fears were confirmed again when a substantive increase in hydro rates was released under the cover of Thanksgiving constituency week.

Ontarians are tired of the Liberal government not being open and transparent with them about their hydro bills.

Speaker, will the minister admit that the reason the government always releases these numbers when the House is not sitting is that they recognize how damaging these increases are to families and to the province's economy, and it underlines their disastrous management of our electricity system?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the member knows that our 2013 long-term energy plan projected rate increases over a 20-year period and that the increases announced last week are below those projections.

In addition, the member knows we are continuing to mitigate rates with the new Ontario Electricity Support Program, which will reduce rates for modest-income families by \$360 per year.

In addition, the debt retirement charge imposed by the Conservatives is being removed from the bill starting in about nine weeks, saving homeowners another \$70 per year.

These are in addition to existing programs, which give seniors a property tax credit of up to \$1,131 per year, and

northern Ontarians have a tax credit of up to \$221 per year.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's another shell game proposed by the Liberals, but the people in Ontario are not being fooled.

As announced last week, on November 1 rates are up again. At peak, they will be 17.5 cents a kilowatt hour. That is more than four times what they were when the Liberals came to power.

Last winter, our offices were inundated with messages from residential and commercial ratepayers who had no idea how they would pay their hydro bills.

Now, in less than two weeks, power is going up a staggering 8.7% for on-peak rates, rates that were already too high.

Speaker, how can the minister justify these extreme price increases to seniors trying to stay warm in their homes and on a fixed budget, and to Ontario families who have no idea how they're going to pay their bills this winter?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, neighbouring jurisdictions, starting in the United States, typically experience higher residential rates than Ontario. Comparing our peak or highest price to US states, we see higher rates in New Jersey, at 17 cents per kilowatt hour; Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire and Rhode Island at 19 cents. In Connecticut and New York, prices are roughly 22 cents per kilowatt hour, and states like California—18 cents per kilowatt hour—also experience prices higher than those in Ontario.

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While Ontario has already made the necessary infrastructure upgrades to transition off dirty coal, many of these jurisdictions still rely on coal for a significant part of their supply mix. This means prices could likely increase as they switch to cleaner forms of generation, and many jurisdictions, like Michigan, Nova Scotia, Maryland and Pennsylvania—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, fun with numbers, like that reference to a cup of coffee, but the people know better. Once these new rates come into effect, it will further entrench Ontario as one of the most expensive energy jurisdictions in all of North America. I can remember when the minister called these incentives nothing more than a cup of coffee; however, with this increase, the average ratepayer will pay over \$120 more per year, and more if you're in a detached dwelling.

Speaker, the minister knows that energy poverty is a fact in this province, and it is hurting Ontario families. It is deepening due to the arrogance of their mismanagement of the file. Ontarians cannot afford the projected hydro increases due to your reckless energy plans.

Speaker, can the minister stand up now, stop serving coffee and acknowledge the harm he is doing to Ontario families, or does he just not care?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the member chooses to ignore the fact that we're starting a new Ontario Electricity Support Program that will reduce rates for modest-income families by \$360 per year. I've already indicated as well that the debt retirement charge is coming off the bills.

But most importantly, particularly for rural areas, we're doing a very significant initiative to expand natural gas to rural communities, which will enable them to use less or get off electricity, which is causing rates to go up because they're bound by that. They don't have the benefit of natural gas.

We have a program coming on stream for a loan program. We also have a grant program. The rural wardens love this program. They know it's going to help their communities.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Todd Smith: Back to the Minister of Energy. Last week I saw a slide. It was meant for potential Hydro One investors. It said, "Formal ... agreement ensures the government is investor, not manager." It's another fine example of Liberals saying one thing and doing another. To the people they say, "Don't worry. The government's in control." To the investors they say, "Don't worry. The government isn't in control."

We've been saying it all along: The government is giving up majority control. Obviously, they're losing control of the company. Mr. Speaker, will the minister admit in this House that they will have no control over Hydro One as prices skyrocket and more seniors and other folks have to choose between heating and eating?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Speaker, speaking of saying one thing and doing another, I'd like to remind the member that during the 2014 election, both he and his party campaigned on a platform of "opening both Hydro One and OPG to investment.... That initial sale could later be followed by a public offering of shares to both institutional and retail investors.

"Selling part of these two provincial assets will free up money to pay down debt" and customer "prices would continue to be" protected "by the Ontario Energy Board."

The PC energy policy white paper is the latest and only policy on energy that the PC Party has released.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. The member from Renfrew, come to order.

Wrap up, please.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The new leader of the PC Party, Mr. Speaker, has not disavowed that particular policy, which his previous leader had adopted. So they are supportive of expanding the public ownership of Hydro One.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: I would like the minister to actually answer the question: Who will have control of Hydro One when this is all over? Because on June 5, a headline in the Oakville Beaver read: "Government Will Still Control Hydro One After Privatization, Energy Minister Bob Chiarelli tells Oakville audience."

Then on October 9, in the Canadian Press, "The Liberals insist the government will maintain control of Hydro One."

Despite that not being possible, as the government is giving up majority control, we fast-forward and the government is admitting to Bay Street that they're simply just another investor. So which is it, Mr. Speaker? What is it going to be? Is the government going to have control or is the government just another investor looking to maximize profits through increased hydro rates for its customers?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the member knows that, by law, the largest single shareholder in Hydro One will be the government of Ontario. The preliminary prospectus, which he has a copy of, outlines a legally binding governance agreement that serves both the public interest and the interests of investors. The agreement details the relationship between the government and Hydro One, confirming the government's rights as the principal shareholder but not allowing Hydro One to be free to operate without political interference in its operations. Led by the board and new management team, the company has committed to focus on improved performance.

The reality is, no other shareholder will be able to have more than 10%. There will be broad sale at the retail level to broaden ownership. With a combination of our rights in appointing the board plus all these other factors, we're confident that the public interest will be protected.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: The government will have 40% control. Everyone else will have 60% control of Hydro One. This Liberal government is clearly no longer in it for the people of Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Finish, please.

Mr. Todd Smith: Hydro One is a monopoly controlling 97% of transmission lines in Ontario. The people in Ontario don't have a choice to get their power anywhere else. It's the only electricity highway in the province, and the government is giving that away. That's why this is a bad deal and that's why we oppose it. The government isn't giving people choice, but instead is giving them higher hydro bills with no way out. The loss of majority control means this government won't be able to stop skyrocketing prices and won't have a say in the expansion of transmission lines.

Why won't the minister stand up for Ontarians, tell the truth and admit they're giving up control of the company?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I want to start by saying that Hydro One distribution represents 24% of the distribution in the province of Ontario. Certainly in distribution, it's not in a monopoly situation.

And again, if he will want to consult any corporate lawyer, he will know that where you have sales of shares broadly to the public, like the banks, no more than 10% can be owned by one shareholder. There is a certain reality there that enables the public interest to be protected. Also, the Ontario Securities Commission has very, very strict rules on transparency, including transparency on salaries, quarterly reporting and audited statements. There's a lot more there than he's prepared to admit in terms of where Hydro One sits with respect to control.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I also want to begin by congratulating Prime Minister-elect Justin Trudeau, thanking outgoing Prime Minister Stephen Harper for his years of service, and thanking Thomas Mulcair, the leader of the federal New Democrats, as well as New Democrat candidates and volunteers—in fact, candidates and volunteers from all parties—for their participation in the federal election from coast to coast to coast.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. The first tranche of the Premier's sell-off of Hydro One shares was supposed to raise for the government \$2.25 billion. Now we've learned that it's only expected to return about \$1.7 billion. That's more than half a billion dollars short, a 25% loss for the people of Ontario before a single share has been sold. This bad deal is getting worse by the day.

Will this Premier admit that it is a bad deal and stop her unnecessary sell-off of Hydro One?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to acknowledge that last night was a very exciting night in this country, and the Blue Jays won.

Applause.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Exactly. How could nobody mention the Blue Jays?

I want to thank every person who went out to vote. I want to thank all the volunteers from all the parties, and all of the leaders—and their families—who put their names on a ballot and sacrificed so much. It is such a wonderful process. We're blessed to live in this country. Congratulations to all.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: On the issues before us, they are related to the issues that have been talked about in this federal election. We must make investments in infrastructure. We must invest in the roads and the bridges and the transit that we know are going to allow us to thrive as a province and as a country. The broadening of the ownership of Hydro One is part of that process.

The leader of the third party knows full well that this is just the first step, that the price has not landed. What

she also knows is that we must invest now to create jobs now and to create prosperity in the future.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: If the Premier's sell-off of Hydro One continues down the path that it is currently on, she could come up \$2 billion short on the sell-off that was always a bad deal for Ontarians.

The people of Ontario have watched over and over again as the Liberals have handed billions of dollars away to their friends. Now this Premier expects them to simply accept that she's going to sell off our most important, our most treasured public asset for a fraction of what it is worth.

Will this Premier start behaving responsibly, acknowledge that this is a mistake and stop the sell-off of Hydro One?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, we are going to make the investments in infrastructure in this province that are necessary for jobs now and for future prosperity. We ran on that, we are implementing that plan, and part of that plan was to leverage current assets in order to invest in the assets that we need for the 21st century.

The leader of the third party knows that the broadening of ownership of Hydro One has many steps. This is just the first step in that process. She also knows that the final price has not yet been set. We are on track to realize that \$9 billion and we are going to make those investments in infrastructure that we know are so critical.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: At every turn and at every opportunity, this Liberal government has been creative with their numbers to the people of Ontario, from the gas plants to Ornge to eHealth to the sell-off of Hydro One. Now this Premier is poised to sell off Hydro One for likely over \$2 billion less than what the government said it was worth, and we all know many, many people have weighed in to say that the government's estimates are seriously lowballed.

This is a bad deal, Speaker, and it keeps getting worse. Will this Premier stop this wrong-headed sell-off of Hydro One?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: As we know, it's still under review. The prospectus is going before the public. We haven't finalized what that price will be. We recognize that in the prospectus, a billion dollars was actually put out through a dividend which goes to consolidated revenue for the people of Ontario and the ratepayers.

What's really important to note is we are broadening ownership. We're not selling 100% of this corporation, only 15% as a first tranche. We recognize that it's going to be controlled by the OEB when it comes to protecting consumers and ratepayers for pricing. But more importantly, unlike what has happened in the past, we're reinvesting dollar for dollar into infrastructure, into other assets for making Ontario competitive and more prosperous in the future.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. The Premier has said many times that the government will somehow maintain de facto control over our hydro system. But the sales pitch that the Premier is flogging to investors is saying something quite different. The company “will operate with an independent board and autonomous decision-making.”

The Premier is saying one thing to investors and she’s saying something completely different to Ontarians. Will this Premier admit that the government will not have control over Hydro One, de facto or otherwise?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, no, Mr. Speaker, because that’s not true. The fact is that there is a balance that has to be reached, and that balance is that we need to broaden the ownership of Hydro One to make it a better-run company, to leverage that asset in order to invest in the infrastructure that we know we need now and in the future.

At the same time, we need to put the protections in place that were not put in place, for example, in the sell-off of the 407, protections that would guarantee that for major decisions, the people of Ontario would make those decisions, because there would need to be two thirds of the board that would agree. With 40% ownership of the board, that would require that the people of Ontario have a say. We retain control of the removal of the board, the removal of the CEO.

Those protections are in place. At the same time, we are leveraging this asset to make the investments we know we need to make.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontarians are worried about what losing control of their public hydro will mean for reliability and for already soaring electricity rates.

While the Premier is telling Ontarians that the government will retain control, her sell-off road show to investors proudly proclaims that the formal governance agreement “ensures [the] government is [an] investor, not a manager.”

Will this Premier admit that investor profit will be the prime motivator in Hydro One and that she has no plan to exert any public policy control over Ontario’s hydro utility, just like she’s promising to the investors?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What the leader of the third party is saying is just not accurate. The very protections that we have put in place are to guarantee that the 40% ownership that will be retained by the people of Ontario is able to exert some control. But it’s true, the company needs to be run better. There need to be improvements and those improvements will be made.

Most importantly, we’ve said clearly to the people of Ontario that we were going to make investments in roads, bridges and transit in order to be able to move goods more efficiently, to move people, to improve people’s quality of life. That is what we are doing. By leveraging this asset, we are going to be able to invest in the assets—all of those pieces of infrastructure that we know

we need for now in order to create jobs but also in the future and for our economic prosperity.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The loss of control over Hydro One is particularly troubling to Ontarians since this Premier has stripped Hydro One of all independent oversight. Ontarians have endured a quadrupling of their energy rates under this Liberal government, and the Liberals just announced that the rates in fact are going to increase by more than \$100 a year. It is obvious that shareholder return on investment is more important than controlling rates for families and businesses. It is obvious that this deal is a bad deal all the way around.

The Premier has a chance to do the right thing. Will she stop the unnecessary sell-off of Hydro One?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It’s very important that we understand how critical the investments are that we need to make. I truly believe that one of the reasons we have the new Prime Minister we have in this country is that he understands investment. He understands that if you believe in infrastructure and you’re going to invest in it, you have to have a way to pay for it. That is not what the leader of the third party believes.

We’ve made a very tough decision. We’ve made a very tough decision on Hydro One. We’ve put protections in place. We’ve made sure the big decisions require two thirds of the board and that the people of Ontario retain 40%. But we are going to move forward, and now we’re going to move forward in partnership with a federal government that shares the same value system.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, no. The member from Windsor—Tecumseh, come to order, please. New question?

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Minister of Finance. When the Liberals took office in 2003, revenues in Ontario were just over \$66 billion. Today, revenues are \$124 billion but, sadly, expenses are \$132 billion. It’s clear we don’t have a revenue problem in Ontario; we have a spending problem.

On W5 last week, the Treasury Board president emphatically announced, “We’re out of money.” She then stated, “We have to do everything we can to raise revenues.”

Speaker, my question for the minister is simple: Which taxes are you going to raise this time?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Ontario’s GDP has now increased 14.4% from the recession low and is now 8.9% higher than it was during that time, so we have grown our economy. We’re continuing to do what’s necessary to provide greater prosperity for the people of Ontario. We are being disciplined and determined in ensuring that we control our program spending. As a result, year over year we’ve exceeded our targets and we’ve done what’s necessary to bring down our deficit, as we said we would,

and we'll go to zero by 2017-18, ensuring that we invest in our economy while protecting those programs that are essential to the people of Ontario: health care, education and social programs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the minister: It's alarming to hear the head of our treasury announce to the entire country, "We're out of money," and then, last week, the minister reported meager economic growth in Ontario; in fact, he showed we're stagnating. He reported annualized growth of only half of what was forecast in his spring budget.

Because the Liberals simply cannot control their spending, they will come up short by hundreds of millions of dollars. This happened last year, too—they came back with cap in hand for a further \$500 million—but this time, they've already blown through their contingency budget.

So again, Speaker, I ask the minister: Which taxes are you going to raise this year?

1100

Hon. Charles Sousa: President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Good morning. I am delighted to actually give the quote in full. Actually, the documentary did carry the quote in full, and this is a quote that I am fond of using. A physicist named Ernest Rutherford, a New Zealand physicist, had a project, and here's what he said. He assembled his crowd together when they hit a financial problem. He said, "Gentlemen, we have run out of money. Now it is time to think." Speaker, that is exactly what we're doing at the Treasury Board. We are thinking through all of our government expenditures.

You are the party that is standing up, looking to raise compensation for—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: You were the party that rejected our plans to reduce the cost of generic drugs. We were able to bring down the cost of—

Mr. John Yakabuski: You were the thinking party that got us into this mess. Don't think any more.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, second time.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We were able to bring down the cost of drugs by 50%, and you said, "No, don't do that. Keep those drugs as high as you can." You even had pharmacists running, one of whom got elected—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —on the platform of raising—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier: The government is promising Bay Street high cash

dividends for investors who buy Hydro One stock, but these dividends are paid for by electricity consumers, and their bills are going up.

The latest government price increase last week will mean that a typical household will pay more than \$120 extra per year for electricity, starting this winter, than last winter. Peak hour rates will be 25% higher this winter than they were the last.

Why is the government promoting rising electricity rates to Bay Street as a main selling point of Hydro One instead of keeping these rates affordable for Ontarians?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the member doesn't seem to be able to recall that there are three very, very significant controls over the electricity sector, including Hydro One, Toronto Hydro and all the others.

Number one, the Ontario Energy Board controls rates. They have the ultimate control of how to set rates, and the rates have to be justified by the costs from all of these different agencies.

The Ontario Securities Commission requires audited financial statements four times a year. They require disclosure of salaries to senior officials. They watch, like a hawk, all of the operations to make sure that they're properly done and done responsibly.

The IESO is responsible for planning the system. We have expanded their authority to make sure that they can create the infrastructure that's required in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, there's tremendous control—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Peak hour electricity rates will be 25% higher this winter than they were last winter—a 25% increase in just one year. These are the regulated rates approved by the Ontario Energy Board.

The minister says the OEB will keep rates affordable once Hydro One is privatized. He just talked about how they'll be controlled. If the OEB can't keep rates affordable now, how will it keep rates affordable once Hydro One is privatized, especially when the government is promoting rising Hydro One profits to Bay Street investors as a key selling point? How?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Encouraging consumers to shift to off-peak consumption helps reduce the need for costly new peaking generation, which would significantly drive rates up. The Auditor General, whose appointment the NDP and the PCs both supported, said that the on-peak-to-off-peak ratio needed to be broadened to further incent conservation. The former Environmental Commissioner, also supported by both the NDP and PCs, called for the very same thing, stating that a bigger differential between off-peak and on-peak would help Ontarians conserve electricity. Ontarians told the OEB that they want electricity pricing to provide greater incentives to conserve.

Giving customers incentives and opportunities to manage their bills by shifting time of electricity use is a key objective of the OEB's price plan, following the direction

from the Auditor General and the Environmental Commissioner.

ARTS AND CULTURE

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: My question is to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Last week, I was pleased to join the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport at the first-ever cultural strategy consultation, in my riding of Barrie.

The MacLaren Art Centre is a heritage building in Barrie that has been transformed into a dynamic cultural hub. We were joined by Nova Bhattacharya, a choreographer and dancer; Peter Lynch, a filmmaker and documentarian; and over 100 members of the community from all walks of life, ethnicities, ages and backgrounds to discuss what culture means to us. It was an energetic and exciting night, with many fantastic conversations and ideas.

Minister, can you provide us with some detail about the cultural strategy and the process of the sessions?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I just want to start by saying how proud I was to join the MPP from Barrie in her town. It was an incredible event and there was a lot of excitement, and a great conversation took place.

Our government is committed to this effort because we believe that art and culture are important to the quality of life here in the province of Ontario. We also believe that it's an indicator of well-being and enhances our sense of place. It helps shape and enrich our lives and communities, not to mention that it is a huge economic driver for the province at nearly 4% of our GDP. It represents \$22 billion in our economy and employs over 280,000 people.

We also know that so much has changed in the last decade. There's a change in the fiscal situation and the demographics—and the digital changes within the sector. We want to take creativity and innovation and leverage it so we can continue to grow our knowledge-based economy here in the province of Ontario. Most importantly, we want a strategy that reflects the needs of Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Thank you, Minister. I'm proud of the successes our government continues to make in the area of arts and culture.

The arts can have a profound effect on our lives. As an educator, I know that for children and youth, participating in the arts can lead to better social skills, better grades at school and lower dropout rates—simply a better start in life. For seniors, participating in the arts can lead to better health and well-being. Arts and culture strengthen the economy, attracting people to live in, visit and spend money in our communities. Creativity plays an important role in innovation, which in turn plays a pivotal role in economic development.

Minister, can you inform the members of this House how they and their constituents can take part in the culture strategy?

Hon. Michael Coteau: Again, I want to thank the MPP from Barrie.

We're hosting 11 town halls throughout the province, from Sudbury and Thunder Bay in the north to Ottawa and Kingston in the east and London and Windsor in the southwest. The next cultural strategy will be held this Thursday, October 22, in the beautiful town of Thunder Bay.

Town halls are just one way that people can voice their opinions. I encourage everyone to join the live conversation online at ontario.ca/culturetalks.

Another forum for people to have their say and to talk about culture and what it means to them is to join the conversation on Twitter with the hashtag #ONculture.

It's important, and we believe this is an opportunity for Ontarians right across the province to talk about what culture means to them. We know that by maximizing our resources and building culture and art here in the province of Ontario, we're building Ontario up.

STEEL INDUSTRY

Mr. Toby Barrett: To the Minister of Finance: We know this government is aware of the immediate threat to employees and retirees at US Steel Canada, specifically to their pensions and benefits.

This government has announced a \$3-million transitional health benefit fund. However, across Haldimand-Norfolk, Hamilton and Niagara, we now have 20,000 vulnerable retirees who are struggling with the grim reality that they were asked to take pensions and pension increases in place of wage increases.

1110

Minister, apart from supporting US Steel Canada's restructuring process, and apart from the transition fund, my question is, what specifically will this government be offering to pensioners at US Steel Canada?

Hon. Charles Sousa: It's an appropriate question, and I appreciate the concern the member opposite has, as do all of us, for the families who are affected by the proceedings of the US parent and the bankruptcy that has taken place.

We have stood by the retirees and the workers throughout this process, recognizing how important it is to them to ensure that they're protected after this very unfortunate situation. It's why we continue to negotiate on their behalf, it's why we've put forward a transition for the next six months to protect those families, and it is why we're demanding that the federal government release the agreement they made with the US parent that was done in secret, which has serious implications for these families. We would like to know what has taken place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: We also know the assets of US Steel Canada are now in play. The land, plant and equipment are now on the market for new bidders. In addition to the valuable workers, there are valuable assets: the coke oven, the hot strip mill, the galvanizing line, and very large acreages at both Hamilton and Lake Erie Works.

I can attest that at Lake Erie Works, they truly have put their shoulder to the wheel. They're vigorously pursuing new orders for steel, and they're rooting out waste and inefficiency.

Will the minister explain to this House just what the government's plans are and the action steps that are being actively pursued in conjunction with your government's strategy to support Ontario's steel industry, and more specifically to support the restructuring of US Steel Canada?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the direction that the member is taking. What he's suggesting, and I think all of us should appreciate, is that we want to make certain that US Steel Canada remains a going concern. That's at risk right now because of the actions taken by an agreement made by the federal government that has yet to be released, and by the actions of the US parent that are stripping away the very assets and value from the Canadian operations, including Lake Erie Works.

We will continue to work to find ways to protect the industry. It is an essential industry in the automotive sector, and we know we have only a few left, including one in Sault Ste. Marie, all of which provide support to this critical sector and this industry.

We will work and continue to work alongside the member, as well, to find ways to foster means to make US Steel Canada a going concern or a legible—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Premier. Ontarians pay more, by far, for auto insurance than anywhere else in the country.

This government promised that they would reduce auto insurance rates by 15% within two years. That was over two years ago.

A recent York University business school study of insurance rates found that over the same two years, Ontarians were overbilled for their auto insurance to the tune of \$1.5 billion. That's outrageous.

Mr. Speaker, will this government commit today to reduce auto insurance rates by 15%?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: This government has been committed to finding ways to reduce the cost of claims and ultimately reduce the premiums of those claims. It was the member opposite and his party who actually delayed the ability for us to provide for those programs and legislation to enable those reductions. That is taking place, and we'll continue to do what's necessary to support a very sustainable, lower-cost industry.

It's not about reducing rates at one point in time, but being able to enable the industry to have lower costs on an ongoing basis.

We have reduced rates substantively. We have to do better, and as a result of recent legislation we put forward, it's starting to happen, and we continue to fight for those consumers and for our ratepayers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Mr. Speaker, the fact is, this government isn't anywhere near their stated commitment of a 15% reduction in auto insurance rates for consumers. The minister responsible has gone from promising to reduce the rates by 15% in two years to no longer committing to a time line. That's because this government is placing too much emphasis on reducing costs for the insurance companies today, while its wait-and-see approach for Ontario leaves people struggling to keep their cars on the road.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier commit today to reducing outrageous auto insurance rates for all Ontarians by 15% immediately? You have a majority government. You could do it right away.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Just last week, I announced the ability to reduce rates by an additional 5% to 10% through installing winter tires, for example; we also took steps to reduce dispute resolutions; we took steps to protect consumers with respect to the amount of interest payments that they have on monthly costs, all of which enables consumers to pay less and enables those insurance companies to charge less.

I also encourage the member opposite to tell his constituents and others that it is a competitive industry—well over 100 companies offering insurance—and you have to give them an opportunity to shop around because, when they do, they'll be able to find even greater reductions because some insurance companies have reduced their rates by 10% and 15% already; some have not. I encourage them to shop around and ensure they get the best rates they can. In the meantime, we will continue to find ways to reduce those costs by the programs that we put in place, including the elimination of storage costs.

GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: My question is for the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. In the 2014 election, Ontarians voted for a government that would create a business climate that encourages companies of all sizes to grow and create jobs, something that's very important to my community of Cambridge and, indeed, Waterloo region.

I understand that this has been an important priority in various ministries. Strategic planning to increase competitiveness in Ontario helped make our province the number one North American jurisdiction for direct foreign investment in 2015. While it's an important achievement, I know that our government continues to work on streamlining business laws, ensuring that they're responsive to changing priorities and supportive of a prosperous economy.

Can the minister please speak to the work that his ministry has been doing to ensure Ontario is open for business?

Hon. David Orazietti: I just want to take a quick moment to congratulate Terry Sheehan, our new federal MP in Sault Ste. Marie.

I want to thank the member from Cambridge for asking a question on this important issue and for her advocacy. In our 2015 budget, we committed to strengthening opportunities for business in Ontario. Ontario has over a million active businesses with over 60,000 new businesses registering each and every year.

In order to help these businesses grow and create jobs, our government is undertaking a comprehensive review of corporate and commercial statutes. Through this review, the first of its kind in 10 years, we are exploring innovative business structures to solidify Ontario's position as a jurisdiction of choice for new businesses, including social entrepreneurs who are driving innovation and competing to attract investment globally.

As part of this process, we're going to be implementing changes that will modernize governance structures that will make it more attractive to do business in Ontario and changes that will streamline reporting requirements so businesses will want to come to Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: Thank you to the minister for his response and the commitment that his ministry has made to modernizing Ontario's business law.

This is an important component of our government's plan to build Ontario up. I know that the minister has been personally engaged with provincial and territorial counterparts on ways to reduce burdens on the many businesses that call our province home. Many businesses have asked for the opportunity to offer feedback to ensure business law keeps up with the evolving trends and technology. I understand that the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services, as part of our Open Government commitment, has made sure that expert and public feedback would influence its business law modernization.

Speaker, through you, can the minister please speak to the consultations and work with the experts that his ministry has conducted to help make Ontario a dynamic business climate?

Hon. David Orazietti: Again, to the member from Cambridge, thank you for the supplementary question. I'm pleased to report that our government's work on this initiative has effectively utilized expert recommendations.

1120

This past spring, in fact, an expert stakeholder panel met for several months to consider priorities that would support a dynamic business climate in Ontario and solidify Ontario's position as a jurisdiction of choice for businesses. The panel's report to government was posted on the regulatory registry this September, and the feedback we receive will provide an important impact to our review.

I want to thank my parliamentary assistant, Chris Ballard, the MPP for Newmarket–Aurora, for his work on this initiative—

Applause.

Hon. David Orazietti: —absolutely—and for his work with our new advisory council. The council's

creation will follow up on the recommendations made by our stakeholder panel, ensuring that any changes are responsive to the business priorities and support a prosperous economy in Ontario.

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My question is to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. I have received reports of falling debris from industrial wind turbines in the municipality of Bluewater. Farmers harvesting their crops were warned to stay a minimum of 300 metres away from these turbines.

According to a CKNX 920 report, Bluewater council has asked staff to look into reports that parts of wind turbines are falling off the blades. Mayor Tyler Hessel reported that a few residents have told their councillors that they've been told by the wind energy company officials not to take crops off near the turbines until they notify the company, so they can slow down the turbines.

Speaker, will the minister order an immediate and thorough safety inspection by an impartial third party of industrial wind turbines in Ontario and commit to halting any turbines deemed unsafe?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member from Huron–Bruce for her question and her vigilance, because we all take public safety in any piece of public infrastructure very seriously. I want to thank you for that. I will also meet with her at her convenience to review this particular file and ensure that we are fully enforcing our safety standards and laws.

Wind turbines are just about the safest technology we have out there, certainly compared to coal plants, which for seniors, for kids, asthma, air quality issues—there are challenges with every technology, from transmission lines to nuclear. The enemy of good is perfect.

But we face a climate crisis, and the Minister of Energy and I and the Premier are working very hard to deliver safe, affordable, clean energy to Ontario. That continues to be our priority.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Back to the minister: This is a matter of safety today, and we're talking about potential harmful direct impacts that we've worried about for years. We all know the Liberal green energy scheme has been a complete failure, contributing to yet another electricity rate increase as of November 1, and now industrial wind turbines are reported to be literally falling apart.

Why won't the minister commit today to an immediate and thorough safety audit of industrial wind turbines in Ontario?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, we look very carefully at every single piece of infrastructure, every industrial site. We have strong inspections. I have been personally in the member's riding this summer, visiting with farmers and visiting with community leaders, listening to concerns. I think that's actively our responsibility

as members of this assembly, to get out of our own constituencies and listen to Ontarians.

This is an issue of concern, but to generalize it and suggest this is a problem with a particular technology is, I think, premature. We take these things seriously. I will work with the member opposite because I share her concern for public safety, and I will be open in sharing the results of any inspections with her.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier. In April 2014, the government arbitrarily shortened the length of the Partner Assault Response Program, the only government program for men who abuse, in order to cram through an additional 2,200 offenders. Across the province, violence-against-women agencies and PAR providers sounded the alarm. Hiatus House in Windsor and WomanACT in Toronto are no longer delivering PAR because they believe the changes are putting women at risk. Everyone, except the government, understands that there is a crisis in the design and delivery of PAR programs.

Speaker, why is the Premier refusing to listen to experts and front-line agencies who are pleading for a halt to these changes and for meaningful consultation on the review of PAR?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Attorney General.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I want to thank the member for her question, but, like I've said many times in this House, we have not reduced the amount in the budget—on the contrary. There was a review that was done because some areas were very, very busy and did not have enough money to cover the program. So there was a review done, and we reviewed the program and redirected the money where it should be.

Moreover, we looked at the number of sessions that were provided. Yes, there was a waiting list. By reducing—further to consultation with the experts—by two sessions, we were able to eliminate the waiting list. We always review, and we work with the experts and adjust accordingly.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Putting more offenders through on the same budget represents a cut.

Speaker, the Premier knows that you can't make good policy without good data, yet WomanACT was instructed to stop collecting data on PAR, perhaps because their data was showing that the new 12-week model was creating a revolving door and compromising the program's effectiveness.

Will the Premier commit to collecting data from all PAR programs in Ontario and to working with qualified researchers to analyze the data against the evidence of what works from similar programs in other jurisdictions?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, as I said, we work with the experts. We look at what is done, what is working, what is not working, and we change the program accordingly, like I said.

Last year, we changed the format of the PAR Program to reduce wait times. I said that in answering the first question. The new 12-session model allows the program to serve an additional 2,200 offenders per year, which is an increase in the program capacity of more than 22%. This means that offenders can enter the program more quickly and victims will have easier access to support services. So these changes do not impact the objective of the program. Offenders will continue to be held accountable to an appropriate and relevant program curriculum.

RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Speaker, thanks for allowing some latitude. I want to take the opportunity to congratulate Kim Rudd, the newly elected MP for Northumberland–Peterborough South, and Neil Ellis, the new MP for the Bay of Quinte riding.

My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Minister, we know that investments in infrastructure across our province are key to economic growth. Besides playing a big part in our quality of life, investing in infrastructure is one of the most important things we can do to jump-start our economy in the short term and improve our productivity and competitiveness in the longer term. Whether we are building highways in Northumberland–Quinte West or public transit in downtown Toronto, we all depend on high-quality infrastructure to keep our communities moving forward. Infrastructure challenges must be addressed in every corner of the province. People need their highways widened and their bridges secured. Rural and small-town Ontario cannot be left behind by investments in our big cities.

Minister, could you please inform this House on what this government is doing to enhance rural infrastructure?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I would like to take this opportunity to welcome a new federal member of Parliament in the riding of Peterborough–Kawartha, Maryam Monsef, who was victorious last night.

I also want to thank my good friend and colleague the member from Northumberland–Quinte West for the question. Prior to his arrival here in 2003, the member from Northumberland–Quinte West was a very distinguished mayor of Brighton, Ontario. I remember, because I was in municipal politics those days, that the mayor of Brighton was a champion for additional infrastructure investment, not only in his community but certainly in eastern Ontario.

We do know, through our \$100-million Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund, where we provide \$50 million through an application-based process and \$50 million through a formula allocation basis, that it's something that our rural municipality leaders have been asking for, and, Mr. Speaker, we have delivered on that commitment.

1130

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Thank you to the minister for that update. Minister, I'm glad to hear, and I know my

constituents in the riding of Northumberland–Quinte West will also be happy, that this government takes the needs of our small town, rural and northern communities seriously. This fund delivers on some long-standing municipal needs by offering permanent, predictable formula allocations that will help address local priorities. By consulting with municipal leaders in these investments, it is clear that our government believes in working collaboratively with other levels of government to ensure we do what's best for the province.

There's always more we can do. Our small, rural and northern communities need a full range of public infrastructure supports, from roads and bridges and water supply networks to green energy and broadband connectivity.

Mr. Speaker, could the minister inform the House of further action that has been taken to support infrastructure development outside of the GTHA?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the member for his supplementary question. Both the member from Northumberland–Quinte West and I were in municipal politics in the late 1990s, and that was a period of time when we had that famous Who Does What committee. In fact, we renamed that committee the “who got done in” committee. Of course, in eastern Ontario, 43% of all the roads and bridges were downloaded in our part of the province. Through this government, since 2003, through the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund and the Small Communities Fund, gradually we're digging out of that ditch. The reason we're digging out of that ditch is the leadership from the member for Northumberland–Quinte West. We will keep moving together to invest in infrastructure in Ontario, because that builds a dynamic private sector economy.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is to the Attorney General. Speaker, we have approximately 40 subordinate legal tribunals which were created to provide low-cost, expeditious access to justice for people. The minister, as the chief law officer of the crown, is responsible for the administration of justice in our province. Senior administrators in the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services have long recognized the failings of the safety, licensing appeals and standards tribunals, or SLASTO for short, in meeting these objectives, and even gone so far as to admitting that the system is broken and dissuades people from seeking remedies and justice.

Speaker, what guidance, advice and actions has the Attorney General undertaken to rectify and remedy the failings of the SLASTO tribunals in general, and specifically the Licence Appeal Tribunal?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, I'll say this: I disagree with the member from the opposite party, because we have very professional individuals working on these tribunals and we have experts as the chairs of the tribunals. This individual who is in charge of the tribunal is a very experienced person.

We always review the tribunal. A few years ago, we started clustering different tribunals so as to reduce costs and to improve the experience and the expertise of the members and to accelerate the cases to be heard. When there are more people that are cognizant of these clustering tribunals, it works better. So I disagree with the member.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Not surprisingly, the Attorney General disagrees with me, but I have a document here which I'll share. In it is a quote from Frank Denton, assistant deputy minister of government and consumer services, in regard to homeowners' dissatisfaction and difficulties in taking action at the LAT: “A less litigious and adversarial process would ... address concerns of homeowners” who “are dissuaded from pursuing LAT appeals” because the process is not transparent, is complicated, time-consuming and unbalanced. Speaker, that quote is from October 2014 and the problems still persist today.

When will the Attorney General take the administration of justice seriously and finally modernize the broken and dysfunctional tribunal system in this province?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I take my job very seriously.

First of all, let's say this: I don't direct the members of tribunals on how to do their work. There is a chair of these tribunals and they are independent.

On the administrative side, there is always a way to improve the quality of the work and also the timeliness to make a decision. So it's important for us to make sure that we will continue to improve the situation. But if there is a special situation, I will be willing to forward the concern to the chair of the tribunal.

Thank you for bringing that to my attention. I will make sure that I'll get back to my colleague on the other side.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Haldimand–Norfolk has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Finance concerning US Steel Canada. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Today in the east members' gallery, we have from Stoney Creek, in the 38th Parliament, Jennifer Mossop. Thank you for joining us today.

A point of order? The deputy House leader.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Arriving during question period was Mr. Rick Firth, executive director, Hospice Palliative Care Ontario, in the members' gallery.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1137 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Speaker, I have about 30 people here today. I'll just introduce perhaps the first 15 or so. They're here with the Save Ojibway group: Nancy Pancheshan is here, along with John Barnett, Renée Trepanier, Stephanie Renaud, Chantel Trudelle, Tracy Rogers, Claire McAllister, Cathy Dodich, Phil Beaudoin, Cheryl Landry, Lorena Shepley, Katie Albert, Judy Allingham, Ronald Pritchard, Krista Zdyb, Carol Easton and Denis Simpson.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introduction of guests? The other 15, please: the member from Windsor West.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I'd like to welcome Sarah Wilkinson, Leonard Wilkinson Misquitta, Gabrielle Wilkinson Misquitta, Kathy Owen, Egemen Aktas, Michelle Mainwaring, Noah Mainwaring, Nancy Maggio, Noah Maggio, Teejai Travis, Daniel Nardone, Kelly Labranche, Laura Martindale, Cassandra Robinson, Mick Dowson, Marie Dowson, Peter Marvel and Mel Diotte. Thank you for joining us.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELLBEING WEEK

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm pleased to rise today on behalf of Patrick Brown and the PC caucus in recognition of Community Health and Wellbeing Week. During this week, Ontario's 109 community health centres, aboriginal health access centres, community-governed family health teams and nurse practitioner-led clinics are holding special events across the province. The week's events are coordinated by the provincial association: the Association of Ontario Health Centres. The theme this week is "Community Health and Wellbeing: Shift the Conversation," creating a new kind of dialogue about health and health care.

As things stand now, far too many Ontarians experience preventable illnesses because our fragmented health care system remains poorly prepared to address the most important determinants of good health: access to good nutrition, housing, social supports, employment, income and education. This province needs to do a much better job of responding to these determinants of health.

During Community Health and Wellbeing Week, the focus is on this very important principle: To improve health and well-being, we need to promote community vitality and people's sense of belonging to that community. Research tells us that when people live in caring and connected communities that make them feel like they belong, they are more likely to be healthy. So in community health centres, in addition to doctors and nurses who provide medical services, there are health promoters and community development workers who run

initiatives designed to create more connected and caring communities for everyone to feel more valued and accepted.

There are two excellent examples of community health centres in my riding: the Central CHC in St. Thomas and the West Elgin Community Health Centre.

Community health centres were introduced by the PC Party 40 years ago when John Robarts was Premier and, in 1982, under the leadership of Bill Davis and Health Minister Larry Grossman, they transitioned from pilot projects into the mainstream health system.

Our party is very pleased to be joining community health centres and other members of the Association of Ontario Health Centres in celebrating Community Health and Wellbeing Week. Their efforts promoting community vitality and a sense of belonging are vital to ensure the best possible health and well-being for everybody living in Ontario.

PEGGY NASH

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's my honour today to rise and talk about a phenomenal woman. Her name is Peggy Nash. She was the MP for Parkdale-High Park for over 10 years. This was a woman who was Buzz Hargrove's EA when she started out, a co-founder of Equal Voice across Canada and winner of many awards, including the YWCA's woman of the year award, which we celebrated in downtown Toronto.

She's actually the woman who mentored me, who got me into politics, who asked me if I would consider running for the New Democratic Party. A phenomenal worker, a phenomenal activist—tireless in her advocacy for all those who needed her most. The founder of the Parliamentary Friends of Tibet, for example.

Because Peggy is such a classy woman, she would want me to thank all of her campaign staff, her campaign manager, Jill Marzetti, and all of the volunteers, of which there were hundreds in our riding. Finally, she would want us to congratulate Arif Virani, who did win and is our new MP.

Peggy, we love you. Whatever you decide to do in your next career, we still love you. Thank you so much for everything you gave and everything you did for Parkdale-High Park.

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Yesterday, Canadians across the country, including myself and my wife, had the opportunity to go to the polls and exercise our democratic right. They had the opportunity to vote for a person who would best represent their communities and values in Ottawa and support investments in health care, infrastructure and our economy—

Hon. Jeff Leal: And who is it?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'll get there in a minute—as well as other important issues, such as affordable housing, environmental protection and retirement savings.

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the very first elected member of Parliament for the new riding of Northumberland–Peterborough South, Kim Rudd, and the very first member of Parliament elected for the Bay of Quinte riding, Mr. Neil Ellis.

As an active volunteer with her community, MP-elect Rudd understands the value these kinds of partnerships and investments mean to our communities and how they will affect all the constituents.

As a former mayor of Belleville, MP Ellis is well aware of the importance of co-operation with different levels of government. This is crucial for the success of the Northumberland–Quinte West region, for the province of Ontario and for our great country.

I'm excited to be able to sit down with my federal counterparts in the coming weeks and months to discuss issues that help build Ontario up. It takes tremendous courage for anyone to make the decision to put their name forward and run in an election. We had many local candidates who stood up for the constituents in Northumberland–Quinte West with honour and pride. I would like to thank them all for taking that on.

NAVRATRI

Mr. Steve Clark: Beginning on October 13 this year, people of Hindu faith across Ontario have been observing Navratri. Navratri is a festival dedicated to the Hindu deity Durga. A common form of celebration during this festival is participating in the Indian dance called Garba.

Over the past few weeks, Hindu communities from different parts of the province have been hosting Garba parties. I had the great pleasure of attending a few Garba parties with our leader, Patrick Brown, in Brampton and Vaughan recently. We took part in the festivities, and we actually learned a few new moves, with thousands of Hindu Ontarians.

The kindness and welcoming nature of our Hindu friends was a true representation of what it means to be Canadian. It is at times such as Navratri that we, as Ontarians, have an opportunity to learn more about the different cultures that contribute to this great province.

I encourage all Ontarians to take time to enjoy the diversity of our population. We're very privileged to live in a province and a great country where we can share the best of many cultures and learn about many different religions, such as the Hindu religion.

The Hindu community in Ontario, consisting of almost 400,000 people, is vital to the economic, social and cultural vibrancy of this province. On behalf of Patrick Brown and the official opposition, I wish all Hindus across Ontario a joyous Navratri, and we look forward to celebrating Diwali with all of you in November.

WOMEN IN POLITICS

Ms. Catherine Fife: Last Friday I had the pleasure of addressing the Women of the Year Awards in Stratford, hosted by Optimism Place, a women's shelter. In the

speech I talked about the importance of women entering the political arena so that the ever-present power imbalance between men and women might finally be addressed.

Progressive legislation and policy needs to be inclusive of all voices. Women rarely see themselves or hear their voices and concerns in political debate. Certainly the issue of violence against women is as current an issue as it always was and always will be until a culture of acceptance is addressed head-on.

While the political pundits and pollsters will analyze the federal election from last night, of the 338 elected, only 88 will be women—26% women—up only one percentage point from the last Parliament. While many voters may have chosen dramatic change in Canada's political landscape last night, one thing remained virtually unchanged: the proportion of women who will serve in the federal Parliament.

A highlight for me, though, was that last night, I drove Heather to the poll. It was her first time voting. She was in her sixties, and she was intimidated by the experience but was so proud to cast a vote for the first time. It provided a good bookend to the day, as I had taken my daughter, Claire, to vote as part of the Equal Voice campaign Take a Girl to Vote earlier that day.

1510

We have a lot of work to do, and we will only be able to refer to our country as equal, as progressive, as just, when the government of the day, regardless of the political stripe, is truly reflective of the population, which must include women and must include electoral reform.

DEFIBRILLATION EQUIPMENT

Mr. Arthur Potts: It gives me pleasure to tell the House today about a great miracle that took place in my riding of Beaches–East York.

Last month, a rugby player with the Balmy Beach Beachers playing at Fletcher's Fields took a hit to the chest and his heart stopped. All his friends knew right away that there was a serious situation because he just collapsed without, in any way, trying to break his fall. Eric Shannon, who was nicknamed "Cotton" because of his soft hands, was clinically dead. The trainer and the medic, Kaylin Perching, and two of his teammates—Haydn Gage, who is a trained firefighter, and Conor McCann, who is also training to become a firefighter—ran over and immediately started CPR. They did so for about 10 full minutes.

Meanwhile, someone went out to the field and got a defibrillator. It took three shocks to get his heart going, but they did get it going. A week later, he was released from hospital, fully healthy, as if nothing had happened.

Eric has said that there should be a defibrillator at every single sports field such as Fletcher's, and we agree with him. I raise this to raise awareness so that we do take the time and the effort to ensure that there are defibrillators at all public and private sporting arenas.

I'd also like to raise the fact about the important training that firefighters get in life-saving techniques.

Had it not been for that training, had it not been for the defibrillator, Shannon would not be with us today.

ONTARIO ENVIRONMENT INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I think the amazing part about statements is that you learn what's happening in each other's respective ridings. I appreciated the statement that we just heard from Beaches–East York, and I just want to share with you that there's a foundation called the David Mounsey foundation in our area that raises funds for defibrillators for all arenas and sports fields. So hopefully it extends. That was very good.

Today, I'd also like to, through my statement, welcome the Ontario Environment Industry Association to Queen's Park. ONEIA members are committed to providing market-driven solutions to today's environmental problems using world-class technologies that are both cost-effective and environmentally sound.

Ontario's environment and clean-tech companies are vital to the health of our dynamic economy and provide industry with the tools they need to succeed in world markets. Their innovative solutions help companies produce higher-quality goods with a lower environmental impact, all while reducing their energy costs. Truly, these companies help create win-win situations for everyone involved.

Because of this, Ontario's environmental industry is recognized globally for its innovative approach. This booming sector, comprised of more than 3,000 environmental companies and upwards of 65,000 employees, exports technologies and services approaching \$1 billion in value to every part of the globe. In fact, this industry is so robust that last year, 75% of these particular businesses reported that they would be increasing their employees and hiring this coming year.

I look forward to their reception this evening in the dining room. Everyone's invited.

TURKISH CANADIAN COMMUNITY

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: I'd like to speak for a moment regarding Turkish heritage day but begin by offering congratulations not only to the Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, but also to the perpetually re-elected Dr. Kirsty Duncan, the MP-elect for the great riding of Etobicoke North.

Speaker, the history of Turkish people and Turkish-origin people in Canada is almost as old as Canada itself. People from the Ottoman Empire arrived on our shores in the early 20th century and established a life here in Canada.

What may be interesting for my colleagues to learn is that people of Turkish origin are not merely from Turkey but actually from about 15 different other countries, which include Turkey, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, and even China, Iran and Russia. And there's another group of

people who are establishing themselves here, the Uighurs, who are now basically subsumed within the mainland of China, but were originally part of the Ottoman Empire.

It's a very vibrant community. There are about 50,000-plus and growing, many of whom make their home in Etobicoke North. They have contributed, as you can imagine, at all different levels. The president and vice-chancellor of the University of Waterloo, for example; Canadian figure skaters; and acclaimed actors and comedians all hail from this community.

I'm very proud to support them and look forward to introducing Turkish heritage week subsequently.

HALTON EQUITABLE DRUG STRATEGY

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: Last week, I was pleased to represent the Ontario government at HEDS Up 2015, a forum hosted by the Halton Equitable Drug Strategy collaborative. The room was full of people from different walks of life, driven by a collective desire to address the complex issues surrounding drug use and addictions in our community.

This made-in-Halton strategy is focused on a vision of a safer, healthier, well-informed Halton that will work to prevent, reduce and eliminate the stigma and harm from substance abuse. To truly assist people suffering from addiction, to help future generations and to protect our community from the dangers associated with drug use requires a multi-faceted approach. Such an approach is possible through collaboratives like the Halton Equitable Drug Strategy, which is coordinating the efforts and expertise of people and services across our region.

At HEDS Up 2015, we celebrated the presentation of an Ontario Trillium Foundation grant of over \$149,000. I'm certain this Trillium grant will assist in our combined efforts to make Ontario and Halton safer and healthier places to live. I am certain, too, that the individuals involved in this wonderful collaborative will add tremendous value.

Mr. Speaker, as you will know, the government of Ontario is currently entering into the second phase of our comprehensive mental health and addiction strategy, and I am proud to note that the goals of the Halton Equitable Drug Strategy are very much aligned with that strategy. By continuing to work together, we can make a real difference in the lives of so many people suffering from addictions, and we can ultimately build stronger, healthier communities.

I congratulate the members of the collaborative and I look forward to working with them in the years ahead.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made in the order of precedence on the ballot list draw of October 5, 2015, for private members' public business, such that Mr. Harris assumes ballot item number 18 and Mr. Arnott assumes ballot item number 78.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received a report on intended appointments dated October 20, 2015, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)9, the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

563523 ONTARIO LIMITED ACT, 2015

Mrs. Martow moved first reading of the following bill: Bill Pr29, An Act to revive 563523 Ontario Limited.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

1064514 ONTARIO INC. ACT, 2015

Mrs. Martow moved first reading of the following bill: Bill Pr30, An Act to revive 1064514 Ontario Inc.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

MOTIONS

SIGN-LANGUAGE INTERPRETATION

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, I believe that you'll find we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the use of sign-language interpreters in the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree? Agreed.

1520

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, I move that on Tuesday, October 20, sign-language interpreters may be present on the floor of the chamber to interpret the proceedings during ministerial statements and responses on the topic of National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree? Agreed. Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Jeff Leal: I believe we have a ballot swap motion regarding Ms. Albanese and Mr. Yakabuski. I move that we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree? Agreed.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot items 78 and 1 be waived at this time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree? Agreed. Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made in the order of precedence on the ballot list draw of October 5, 2015, for private members' public business, such that Mr. Colle assumes ballot item number 5 and Mr. Delaney assumes ballot item number 67.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

NATIONAL DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS MONTH

Hon. Brad Duguid: Thank you to all my colleagues here for agreeing unanimously to allow interpretation to take place during these proceedings. It almost strikes me as odd that we need to get special permission to do that, but we're learning as we go sometimes. It's great to see that here today.

I'm honoured to rise today to recognize National Disability Employment Awareness Month. Ontario stands in solidarity with provinces and territories across the country to highlight the skills that people with disabilities bring to the workplace. National Disability Employment Awareness Month is a great way to encourage more companies to tap into this workforce and, like our province, to see accessibility as essential to a competitive and dynamic economy.

What a great time to be celebrating and accelerating our efforts to make our workplaces across Ontario and Canada more accessible. We're hot on the heels of the most accessible Parapan Am Games ever held. We can't help but be inspired by the athleticism, courage and talent of those incredible athletes from across the Americas who participated in these games. Let us use those memories to inspire us to move forward.

To that end, this year we also proudly celebrated the 10th anniversary of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. This landmark law is transforming communities right across Ontario into more inclusive, accessible places to live.

While we're global leaders in implementing regulations to enhance accessibility in Ontario, we'll only reach our true potential if we can combine these efforts into a significant, province-wide cultural shift. To that end, this year we launched *The Path to 2025: Ontario's Accessibility Action Plan*. A key pillar of this plan is to help businesses understand the value of hiring people with disabilities and strengthening our workforce. We need to change mindsets and build on the progress we've made. We want to make sure that Ontarians are not overlooked in the job pool simply because they have a disability.

There are clear benefits to this. In 2010, the Martin Prosperity Institute outlined that by building an inclusive Ontario, we would see a \$7.9-billion increase to GDP, and that is good for business.

Mr. Speaker, we're focused on being a world leader, setting the standards in accessibility, while building an innovative next-generation economy here in Ontario. To get there, we need the talents and skills of all Ontarians, including people with disabilities.

Along with my special adviser on accessibility, the Honourable David C. Onley, we're focused on promoting employment opportunities for people with disabilities. We're all privileged to have Mr. Onley helping lead these efforts. I can't imagine a more respected or more accomplished Ontarian when it comes to driving us forward to become a more accessible province.

Ontario has an employment standard that was established under the AODA. To be clear, this standard does not force employers to hire people with disabilities, but as part of a significant long-term societal shift, it helps raise awareness and break down barriers for qualified people right from the point of applying for a job. For example, organizations must implement accessibility requirements by a certain time, rather than waiting for an individual to make a complaint under the Ontario Human Rights Code.

The public sector has been required to meet the employment standard since 2014, and it will come into force for large private sector and non-profit organizations in January 2016. We want companies to understand that the shift to an inclusive mindset in human resources will help draw the best talent and grow their bottom line.

In our action plan, we announced two new employer-focused programs. Our Ontario Community Loans Program will provide small and medium-sized businesses with discounted rates on financial products, such as loans, when they commit to hiring people facing barriers to employment, including people with disabilities. We'll be partnering with financial institutions to deliver this program next year. We'll also be introducing a new \$5-million Partnership for Accessible Employment program. This program will help small and medium-sized businesses with knowledge and human resources training, to give them confidence in hiring and retaining persons with disabilities.

Our government has also established a Partnership Council on Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities. This summer, the council presented its first

recommendations to me, and we are already moving forward on many of them. I want to take this time to thank all members of the partnership council for their past and their ongoing leadership and advice.

Mr. Speaker, while Ontario is a global leader in accessibility, we're also leading the way in cutting-edge accessible technologies and market and investment opportunities. Nowhere was this more apparent than during the province's first and highly successful Accessibility Innovation Showcase, held during the Parapan Am Games. It brought together top innovators, investors, academics, students and the public to see new discoveries and market-ready technologies. Innovators included eSight, an Ottawa-based company whose revolutionary digital technology is making it possible for people with low vision to see. This technology allows people with vision loss to enhance their lives by making education and workplaces accessible to them. It even made it possible for a new mother to see her newborn child for the very first time. More than 50 companies and organizations attended the showcase to demonstrate their amazing accessibility technologies—companies like AlterG, which has developed bionic leg technology, and Komodo OpenLab, which has developed solutions for people with upper-body mobility challenges to gain access to computers, smart phones and tablets. These are just a few of the companies offering incredible technological innovations and further positioning Ontario as an accessibility leader.

Technological advancements may soon level the playing field for people with disabilities. Unfortunately, we're not there yet, and there's still more work to do.

Mr. Speaker, Ontario embarked on its ambitious journey towards becoming an accessible province a decade ago. We're proud of what we've accomplished and look forward to supporting more change in the years to come.

1530

I invite and challenge businesses to work with us to continue to build on our strengths and sharpen our focus, and illuminate our path towards our goal of an accessible province by 2025—an Ontario where people can contribute their skills to the workplace, reach their full potential and help grow our economy. So please join me in observing National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's now time for responses.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm pleased to speak today to National Disability Employment Awareness Month on behalf of our PC caucus. It's wonderful that we have this opportunity to increase awareness about the positive outcomes of hiring people with disabilities. It is true that some people have a disability so severe that they can't enter the workforce in any capacity, but there are many who want paid employment but are unable to attain it, not because of their condition but because of barriers in the workplace.

Discriminatory hiring practices, unwillingness to offer accommodation and accessibility can all be issues. Some

employers may hesitate to hire people with disabilities because they aren't comfortable having that discussion with employees and because they don't have a comfortable working knowledge about disabilities, duty to accommodate, the costs related to accommodations or what their legal obligations may be. The discussion about disabilities has broadened in the social context, and we need to extend that conversation to the workplace.

There were 10 disability types identified in the latest Canadian Survey on Disability: seeing, hearing, mobility, flexibility, dexterity, pain, learning, developmental, mental-psychological and memory. Many of these disabilities are not visible and are not well understood by people who have no personal experience with them. That's exactly why we have National Disability Employment Awareness Month, so we can open up that discussion and help to ensure that good information is out there for employers and for prospective disabled employees.

It's an unfortunate reality that there are almost 800,000 disabled working-age Canadians who are able to work but have no jobs. Almost half of these people have post-secondary education. Very good work has been done to narrow the gap in employment between people living with disabilities and the general population, but there's still much to do. It's not just about having a job; it's also about underemployment and addressing gaps in education and in wages as well.

It's important that we recognize that taking steps to address these issues is not just for the benefit of disabled people, but also for the good of our employers and for Ontario's economy. When it comes to recruitment, companies that open the door a little wider will find a segment of our workforce whose potential is waiting to be unlocked. With rising retirement, failing to build a more inclusive workforce represents a large opportunity cost.

There are many great stories we hear from employers who have realized there are benefits to hiring people with disabilities: for example, the tech companies who are hiring people who fall on the autism spectrum, recognizing how the focus and attention to detail associated with autism can, in fact, be a great asset. Tim Hortons has a great record on this front, and owners of those franchises report that disabled employees are often the hardest working and most dedicated. Other companies are recognizing that it pays to have a diverse workforce that resembles their customer base and can speak to a broader clientele. For those disabled employees, this means independence, confidence and the opportunity to put their skills and knowledge to use.

The benefits of labour market participation are a key component of social integration. In my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, there are many organizations that do great work to provide job skills and facilitate employment for those living with disabilities. Right across the street from one of my constituency offices, we have Middlesex Community Living, which has been doing tremendous work on this front for 50 years that has been

benefiting both the people they support and the entire Strathroy-Caradoc community at large.

The bottom line is that we all see positive social and economic outcomes when we take these steps to build an inclusive workforce that leverages people's abilities instead of focusing on their disabilities. I hope this month will help open up that dialogue and help us move toward a fully inclusive workforce in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further responses?

Miss Monique Taylor: This month is dedicated to raising awareness of the employment needs and contributions of individuals with all types of disabilities. The definition of "disability" should be interpreted in broad terms. People with disabilities include physical, non-physical, visible and non-visible disabilities of all types, including diabetes, epilepsy, partial hearing loss, chronic pain and depression.

As Ontarians, we understand that employment and economic security are critical to fulfilling our hopes and aspirations. We also know that we are stronger when our province can benefit from the skills and talents of all of our citizens. No individual in our province or country should face unnecessary barriers to success, and no Ontarian with a disability should be limited in his or her desire to work. A large number of working-age Ontarians have some sort of disability. One in seven people in Ontario have been identified as a person with a disability. Over the next 20 years, that number will rise as our population ages. According to Statistics Canada, 15.9% of Canadians have a disability, and an astounding 49% of adults who have a disability are not in the workforce.

People with disabilities are far more likely to be unemployed than the rest of the population because of the barriers they face, and most of the time, those barriers are not physical. It's a lot easier to address the barriers we can see, hear or touch, but invisible barriers also make it hard for job seekers to obtain employment. Respect for the dignity of persons with disabilities is the key to preventing and removing barriers, as indicated by the Ontario Human Rights Commission. This includes respect for self-worth, individuality, privacy, confidentiality, comfort and independence of persons with disabilities.

During National Disability Employment Awareness Month, we must challenge ourselves as a community to renew our focus on improving employment opportunities and career pathways that lead to good jobs and comprehensive economic futures for people with disabilities. I commend workplaces across the province that have an attitude of inclusiveness and give people with disabilities an opportunity to work.

People with disabilities have the fundamental human right to full integration and participation in society. They should be able to access services, employment and housing, and face the same duties and responsibilities as everyone else. They deserve to retain the small income that they have been able to earn without those earnings being clawed back. When we have this discussion of awareness, it is important that we recognize the financial

hardships that are put on the backs of people with disabilities. It's not fair and it's not acceptable. I was relieved to hear the government's decision to suspend the cancellation of the Work-Related Benefit, funds that allow the opportunity for bus fares, lunches and work clothes. Those funds are the difference between working or not working for some.

As the MPP and critic for community and social services, I will continue to advocate for legislation that will advance the equality for workers with disabilities and play a role in educating my community about accessibility rights and relevant legislation, such as the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, the AODA, as will our NDP critic the member from Essex. He will also be fighting those battles when it comes to the AODA, making sure that we're pushing it forward and holding the government's feet to the fire to make sure that we get it done.

Ontario has laws to improve accessibility for people with disabilities. The goal of the AODA is to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises. Businesses have an obligation to make their facilities accessible. Under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, ministries are required to produce and make available to the public annual plans that identify how they will set out and remove barriers to accessibility.

I will continue to address the government in keeping them responsible for supporting the rights of workers in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

1540

PETITIONS

LAKE NIPISSING WALLEYE FISHERY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Lake Nipissing Stakeholders Association's (LNSA) mission is to provide for the long-term health and sustainability of Lake Nipissing and its fishery; and

"Whereas the walleye population is of particular importance to all stakeholders, the association aims to achieve this mission primarily through an intensive walleye restocking program; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry's only answer to manage the walleye population decline is through more stringent regulations to the recreational fishery, but fails to impose any restriction on the commercial fishery, and furthermore imposed new restrictions on egg harvest for restocking, making restocking unfeasible; and

"Whereas the LNSA has voluntarily done restocking, without these restrictions for over 30 years;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To remove the restrictions placed on the Lake Nipissing Stakeholders Association (2015) and to allow them to restock Lake Nipissing with walleye at higher volumes (20 million)."

I agree with this petition, sign my name to it and give it to page Faith.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Speaker, as you'll recall, back in June I turned in a petition with 4,000 names. I'm going to give you another 8,732 today. I do this in association with the member from Essex and the member from Windsor West.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ojibway Prairie Complex is a five-park system totalling 332 hectares. It represents half of the city of Windsor's remaining natural areas;

"Whereas Ojibway has 160 species at risk—over 20% and 32% for Ontario and Canada's species at risk respectively. It represents Canada's, and the world's, most endangered ecosystem;

"Whereas over 4,000 species live on the site—over 700 plant types (100 are rare, 70 are in the reserve), over 3,000 insects, 233 bird species with breeding evidence for 71 species, and 16 mammals;

"Whereas Ojibway Park and the Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve (OPPNR) are two of the parks in the complex adjacent to the proposed development. These parks are: (1) designated as natural heritage, environmentally significant areas, and in the case of the OPPNR, a provincially significant wetland (PSW) and an area of natural and scientific interest (ANSI); (2) protect biodiversity by hosting: eight endangered and 12 threatened species in Canada;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To designate this land with provincial importance and prevent any development on or adjacent to this land, so that the land will be protected and so too will the 91 species at risk, including six endangered and 12 threatened species on schedule 1 of the Endangered Species Act."

I fully endorse this petition. I will sign my name to it and give it to Soham to take up to the desk.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: I want to thank the BDO Canada office in Alliston for sending me this petition. It's entitled "Petition for the redevelopment of SMH."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital is challenged to support the growing needs of the community within its existing space as it was built for a mere 7,000 visits and experiences in excess of 33,000 visits annually; and

"Whereas the government-implemented Places to Grow Act forecasts massive population growth in New Tecumseth, which along with the aging population will only intensify the need for the redevelopment of the hospital; and

"Whereas all other hospital emergency facilities are more than 45 minutes away with no public transit available between those communities; and

"Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital deserves equitable servicing comparable to other Ontario hospitals,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Kathleen Wynne Liberal government immediately provide the necessary funding to Stevenson Memorial Hospital for the redevelopment of their emergency department, operating rooms, diagnostic imaging and laboratory to ensure that they can continue to provide stable and ongoing service to residents in our area."

I agree with this petition and I'm happy to sign it.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It is my pleasure to introduce a petition called "Protect Ojibway Prairie."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ojibway Prairie Complex is a five-park system totalling 332 hectares. It represents half of the city of Windsor's remaining natural areas;

"Whereas Ojibway has 160 species at risk—over 20% and 32% for Ontario and Canada's species at risk respectively. It represents Canada's, and the world's, most endangered ecosystem;

"Whereas over 4,000 species live on the site—over 700 plant types (100 are rare, 70 are in the reserve), over 3,000 insects, 233 bird species with breeding evidence for 71 species, and 16 mammals;

"Whereas Ojibway Park and the Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve (OPPNR) are two of the parks in the complex adjacent to the proposed development. These parks are: (1) designated as natural heritage, environmentally significant areas, and in the case of the OPPNR, a provincially significant wetland (PSW) and an area of natural and scientific interest (ANSI); (2) protect biodiversity by hosting: eight endangered and 12 threatened species in Canada;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To designate this land with provincial importance and prevent any development on or adjacent to this land, so that the land will be protected and so too will the 91 species at risk, including six endangered and 12 threatened species on schedule 1 of the Endangered Species Act."

Speaker, I have to mention that Dr. David Suzuki also supports the efforts to protect the Ojibway prairie. I fully support this petition. I will sign my name to it and send it up with page Sebastian.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas household electricity bills have skyrocketed by" 58% "and electricity rates have tripled as a result of the Liberal government's mismanagement of the energy sector;

"Whereas the billion-dollar gas plants cancellation, wasteful and unaccountable spending at Ontario Power Generation and the unaffordable subsidies in the Green Energy Act will result in electricity bills climbing by another 35% by 2017 and 45% by 2020; and

"Whereas the Liberal government wasted \$2 billion on the flawed smart meter program; and

"Whereas the recent announcement to implement the Ontario Electricity Support Program will see average household hydro bills increase an additional \$137 per year starting in 2016; and

"Whereas the soaring cost of electricity is straining family budgets, and hurting the ability of manufacturers and small businesses in the province to compete and create new jobs; and

"Whereas home heating and electricity are a necessity for families in Ontario who cannot afford to continue footing the bill for the government's mismanagement of the energy sector;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately implement policies ensuring Ontario's power consumers, including families, farmers and employers, have affordable and reliable electricity."

I agree with this petition. I will sign it, and I want to thank Erna Hubal from Alliston for sending it to me.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that was collected by Mrs. Kathy Whipple. There are over 500 people from Nickel Belt that signed this petition. It reads as follows:

"Hydro One Not for Sale ...

"Whereas the provincial government is creating a privatization scheme that will lead to higher hydro rates, lower reliability, and hundreds of millions less for our schools, roads, and hospitals; and

"Whereas the privatization scheme will be particularly harmful to northern and First Nations communities; and

"Whereas the provincial government is creating this privatization scheme under a veil of secrecy that means Ontarians don't have a say on a change that will affect their lives dramatically; and

"Whereas it is not too late to cancel the scheme;"

Therefore, they "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario immediately cancel its scheme to privatize Ontario's Hydro One."

I fully support this petition. I will affix my name to it and ask Soham to bring it to the Clerk.

LUNG HEALTH

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further petitions? I recognize the member from—

Mr. Grant Crack: Glengarry—Prescott—Russell—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

Mr. Grant Crack: —which just turned Liberal federally.

Thank you, Speaker. A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children” and youth living with asthma. “Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

1550

“In the Ontario Lung Association report, Your Lungs, Your Life, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To allow for deputations on MPP Kathryn McGarry’s private member’s bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario Lung Health Action Plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

“Once debated at committee, to expedite Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, through the committee stage and back to the Legislature for third and final reading; and to immediately call for a vote on Bill 41 and to seek royal assent immediately upon its passage.”

I agree with this petition and I shall give it to the great Kyle, the page beside me.

TAXATION

Mr. Jim Wilson: I have a petition to stop the carbon tax.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Liberal government has indicated they plan on introducing a new carbon tax in 2015; and

“Whereas Ontario taxpayers have already been burdened with a health tax of \$300 to \$900 per person that doesn’t necessarily go into health care, a \$2-billion smart meter program that failed to conserve energy, and households are paying almost \$700 more annually for unaffordable subsidies under the Green Energy Act; and

“Whereas a carbon tax scheme would increase the cost of everyday goods including gasoline and home heating; and

“Whereas the government continues to run unaffordable deficits without a plan to reduce spending while collecting \$30 billion more annually in tax revenues than 11 years ago; and

“Whereas the aforementioned points lead to the conclusion that the government is seeking justification to raise taxes to pay for their excessive spending, without accomplishing any concrete targets;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To abandon the idea of introducing yet another unaffordable and ineffective tax on Ontario families and businesses.”

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that was signed by Mr. Moe Paquette from Hanmer in my riding of Nickel Belt. It reads as follows:

“Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

“Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

“Whereas five provinces and many US states already have some sort of gas price regulation; and

“Whereas jurisdictions with gas price regulation have seen an end to wild price fluctuations, a shrinking of price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to “mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Julia to bring it to the Clerk.

LUNG HEALTH

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children. Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

“In the Ontario Lung Association report, Your Lungs, Your Life, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To allow for deputations on MPP Kathryn McGarry’s private member’s bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014,

which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues; and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario lung health action plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

“Once debated at committee to expedite Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, through the committee stage and back to the Legislature for third and final reading; and to immediately call for a vote on Bill 41 and to seek royal assent immediately upon its passage.”

I agree, will affix my name to the signatures and send it with Marco.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

INVASIVE SPECIES ACT, 2015 LOI DE 2015 SUR LES ESPÈCES ENVAHISSANTES

Ms. McMahon, on behalf of Mr. Mauro, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 37, An Act respecting Invasive Species / Projet de loi 37, Loi concernant les espèces envahissantes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Ms. McMahon.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise in the House today to speak to third reading of Bill 37, the proposed Invasive Species Act. Ontario's natural resources provide a significant source of jobs and economic benefits for our province. They're also a priceless asset in terms of our quality of life. As a consequence, we must take stronger action to address the threats that invasive species pose. We remain committed to addressing this serious threat to our environment and to our economy. With this legislation, our government is showing leadership on this important issue.

I was reminded of this recently when I attended the annual general meeting of the Ontario Invasive Plant Council, held at the Royal Botanical Gardens in Burlington. I was pleased to address this forum and had the opportunity to consult them and secure their feedback on the legislation and, perhaps more importantly, its implementation.

One of the reasons why we decided to act is because Ontario is located contiguous to the Great Lakes. As a consequence, our waterways and our extensive trade links make us more vulnerable and put us at greater risk than other provinces. As a result, more invasive species have become established in Ontario than any other Canadian jurisdiction.

Finally, climate change puts stress on ecosystems, making them more vulnerable to threats from invasive species. We need to act so that future generations will continue benefiting from Ontario's rich natural legacy.

Managing invasive species has always been a shared responsibility across all levels of government, with

industry, with environmental groups and with the public. One of the reasons that these partnerships are so critical is because more than 20 provincial and federal acts are used in Ontario to respond to invasive species threats. These include the Canada Shipping Act, a piece of federal legislation that manages the discharge of ballast water; the Plant Diseases Act, a provincial act banning the transport and sale of diseased plants which could include an invasive insect or pathogen; and the Public Lands Act, again a provincial statute that allows landowners to remove some invasive plants from their shorelines.

None of these laws were designed specifically to address invasive species. If passed, the Invasive Species Act will be the first stand-alone legislation of its kind in Canada. It would complement the role of the federal government in managing invasive species and it would promote shared accountability for managing invasive species.

Another important aspect of this legislation is how it addresses the threat to our biodiversity. Once invasive species are introduced into the wild with no natural predators, they can spread very quickly. Invasive species often out-compete domestic species for food, and they can destroy the habitat of native species. Invasive species are the second-greatest threat to species at risk in Ontario, and they are a leading cause of extinction of species globally.

Closer to home we continue to hear about the pernicious impacts of two invasive species, not only in our consultation with stakeholders across the province, but also I heard them from representations made at the annual Association of Municipalities of Ontario meeting. Two such examples include invasive phragmites, which release toxins from the roots into the soil to harm and kill surrounding plants. It degrades habitat and decreases food supplies for native wildlife, including several species at risk. The invasive dog-strangling vine impacts the reproduction of the monarch butterfly, which is a species at risk. The butterflies lay their eggs on the plant but the larvae are unable to complete their life cycle and do not survive.

Invasive species are also a quality-of-life issue. Fishing and hunting are fundamental to the tradition of all Ontarians but in particular our First Nations, and Ontarians of all walks of life value our natural environment. Invasive species are a threat to the beauty of our natural areas and all our communities. They impact the lives of every Ontarian and cost the Ontario economy tens of millions of dollars each year. They also threaten resource-based jobs in the forest industry, commercial and recreational fisheries, tourism and agriculture to name a few.

1600

By applying a risk-based approach that considers the full range of threats, costs and benefits to the environment, society and the economy, Bill 37 would provide the province with better tools to prevent, control, monitor and eradicate invasive species. It would help by providing the powers to intervene earlier to help prevent

invasive species from becoming established. It would give Ontarians the tools to ban activities, such as processing and transporting certain invasive species. It would allow the government to enable rapid-response actions to stop an invasive species from spreading. And, when needed, it would provide strong inspection and enforcement powers as part of a modern regime necessary to prevent threats today and unknown scenarios well beyond those we can anticipate.

A broad range of stakeholders have expressed strong support for further action to address invasive species; indeed, we saw this during public hearings. The stakeholders include municipalities, conservation groups and industry. They recognize the need for stronger action to manage this threat to Ontario's natural environment and our economy.

We have listened to stakeholders and the public and recognize the importance of using clear language in the proposed bill. That is why we amended the names of the classifications from "significant" and "moderate threat" species to "prohibited" and "restricted" species. This language is commonly used in other pieces of legislation and is consistent with class names used in other Great Lakes jurisdictions. This is important because the Great Lakes governors and our Premiers have committed, through bi-national agreements, to work collaboratively to combat aquatic invasive species, so using the same names for classifications strengthens our partnership abilities.

They also provide clarity, enhancing the capacity of the public to understand the rules governing them. The public will further understand and appreciate that "prohibited" means that a species is generally not allowed, and they will also know that "restricted" means that a species may be allowed under certain conditions.

Prohibited species will have the full suite of prohibitions applied to them. Restricted species will have the full suite of prohibitions available to be applied to them; however, these prohibitions and restrictions would only apply if prescribed in regulation. Our government, as consequence, will conduct significant consultations and will solicit feedback from stakeholders and the general public.

By making this change, we are making it clear that prevention is the key to fighting the effects of invasive species and prohibited species that threaten Ontario and state clearly that they are not allowed. This change also provides flexibility to the public and landowners who are vital partners when it comes to invasive species.

The change to "restricted" species would allow prohibitions to be applied on a case-by-case basis. This flexibility will allow us to balance prevention and management objectives with landowners and other interested parties. This change is especially important to landowners who, through no fault of their own, may have restricted invasive species already established on their own property. The goal with restricted species language is to clarify the classification in order to prevent the further spread of these species and to inform the public on how to safely manage them.

Based on additional stakeholder feedback, we have also made an amendment to broaden prevention measures by enabling the preparation of prevention and response plans for all listed species. We have listened to stakeholders and the public and recognize the need to take a more preventative approach to managing invasive species. Enabling the participation from the public and stakeholders is essential to effectively managing and controlling invasive species. Allowing the development of prevention and response plans for both classes of invasive species will better enable and guide partners and stakeholders while undertaking the activities. Prevention and response plans will be available online and easily accessible to interested parties and members of the public. This change will strengthen the act and enhance our ability to implement the tools necessary to successfully prevent, detect and rapidly respond to invasive species threats.

We recognize the need to exempt partners and individuals from sections of the act for the purposes of implementing prevention and response plans. Partnerships and co-operation from the public will be critical to the successful implementation of the act. This change will clarify that an individual is not contravening the act as long as he or she is undertaking the prohibited activity in accordance with the provisions of the prevention or response plan. This means that landowners and partner organizations will be able to assist in the destruction and management of an invasive species while also ensuring appropriate prohibitions are in place to prevent their spread.

When it comes to personal information, we have listened to the Information and Privacy Commissioner's office and have made amendments to strengthen the protection of it. This change makes it clear that information can only be collected for the purposes of notifying individuals that they may have been in contact with an invasive species, giving notice of an order or facilitating public consultation.

Finally, we recognize the importance of making information on actions and orders associated with the proposed Invasive Species Act available to the public. That is why we made an amendment to improve transparency and help with educating the public on actions and orders taken regarding invasive species.

The change will require the ministry to publicly report on the use of any minister's orders to control an invasive species threat. Our government is committed to transparency and making information available about invasive species, and this will be a key component of prevention and response plans.

In closing, no invasive species are currently listed in Bill 37. The proposed act would enable the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations to list invasive species and carriers of invasive species that would be subject to the act.

The proposed act would provide the minister with the authority to temporarily designate an invasive species where the threat posed requires immediate action.

If the act is passed, extensive public consultation would occur before any species would be listed in the regulations, and any proposed regulations regarding any invasive species would be based on risk assessments that consider the environmental, social and economic impacts.

Stakeholders, including industry, would have an opportunity to review and comment on any proposed regulations before they are made or enforced. Consultation would include posting proposed regulatory conditions and associated information on the environmental and regulatory registries so that the public and stakeholders could review and comment.

If passed, this proposed legislation would broaden the actions we can take in combatting invasive species. To manage them most effectively, we must find them early and respond quickly.

Preventing new species from arriving and preventing the further spread of those invasive species already here is the most cost-effective approach to addressing the long-term impacts of invasive species.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: It is a pleasure to speak to Bill 37, the Invasive Species Act.

The intent of the bill: Those of us on this side of the House agree with the intent of Bill 37, the Invasive Species Act. We understand that invasive species are an urgent problem that has potential catastrophic, adverse impacts on the environment and on the economy. Whether species invade our waters, such as the Asian carp, or our land, such as the invasive phragmites, the potential harm invasive species can cause is significant.

While we support the intent of Bill 37, I still have a number of noteworthy issues with the bill as currently written, which I feel are worth repeating in this forum.

Prior to submitting amendments to the committee, I wrote to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry identifying my concerns with Bill 37. I articulated my feeling of disquiet with the sections authorizing warrantless entry, pointing out that private property rights are the foundation of Western developed civilization and that the continued erosion of the rights of private property owners, even for the noblest of causes, is simply wrong and creates mistrust between residents and government.

I submitted that education and outreach lead to co-operative, mutually respectful relationships with landowners, which results in much better outcomes.

1610

In addition, I asked that the bill be amended to include clearer language on full, fair and timely compensation for the loss of use, enjoyment and/or value of private property.

We all know it is wrong to steal, regardless of the motivation. If it is wrong to steal, I submit that it is doubly wrong for the government to use its monopoly of force to steal from citizens. Governments use vaguely worded terminology such as “the public interest,” as defined by the government, to routinely take private

property from citizens. I cannot emphasize enough that the taking of private property and/or private property rights, such as the loss of use, enjoyment or profitability and/or a decrease in the value of private property, needs to be fairly compensated in a timely manner.

The provincial government’s history with respect to taking and the lack of compensation is disappointing, to say the least, which is why I asked for clear language to be included in the bill to safeguard the rights of private property owners. Unfortunately, that request fell on deaf ears.

Subsequent to the public hearings, we worked diligently to craft thoughtful amendments to submit to the committee which addressed these and other issues—amendments which were tossed out by the government without thought or care.

Costs and benefits: Another related issue I have with the bill as currently written is my well-founded fear that the government will socialize the benefits and privatize the costs of the removal of invasive species through the implementation of this bill. What I mean by that is that society as a whole will benefit from the removal and eventual eradication of invasive species, but the individual landowners will foot the bill. This is unfair on the face of it, given that the threat of invasive species coming onto private property is not necessarily the fault of individual landowners and generally cannot be controlled by individual landowners. The landowners certainly want to help tackle invasive species, but may not have the knowledge or expertise to identify an invasive species and/or the necessary resources to properly remove particular species.

The mismatch between who pays the costs and who reaps the benefits is not a new issue, particularly when it comes to obligations imposed on landowners. Government wants the benefit of the people’s work and resources, but is often unwilling to pay the associated costs.

This same issue plagues the implementation of the Endangered Species Act, which financially penalizes individual landowners who currently host species at risk on their property while exempting everyone else from those costs, including opportunity costs. To reiterate, the landowner who currently hosts the species is at risk to bear costs; those who potentially contributed to the species becoming at risk bear none of the costs. This is upside down and, in the end, incentivizes bad behaviour; namely, “shoot, shovel and shut up.”

People do not want to behave badly, but when you threaten their livelihood and their family, they often feel they have no choice. I believe that government—including legislation, policies and programs—needs to undergo a fundamental attitudinal change to that of incentivizing and rewarding good behaviour rather than prohibiting and punishing everyday common activities, and therefore incentivizing bad behaviour.

People want to do the right thing. We need to find a way that encourages, motivates and assists people, not punishes them for protecting their families and themselves from an intrusive government.

On warrantless entry: In the 17th century, the famous English jurist Edward Coke wrote that a "man's home is his castle." In 1763, in a speech to the British House of Commons that vividly illustrated the strengths of the protection of property rights, William Pitt said, "The poorest man may in his cottage bid defiance to all the forces of the crown. It may be frail, its roof may shake, the wind may blow through it, the storm may enter, the rain may enter, but the King of England cannot enter; all his force dares not cross the threshold of the ruined tenement." Property rights have long shielded homeowners not only from assaults from other people, but also from assaults by government themselves.

In 1991, Canadian Supreme Court Justice Claire L'Heureux-Dubé wrote, "Both the legislator and society as a whole recognize the truth of Edward Coke's adage ... property rights are considered fundamental in our democratic society," which gives rise to the question: Why does this government continue to include warrantless entry into so many of its bills? Warrantless entry is a sure way to anger landowners, if that is the government's intent. If, on the other hand, the government's intent is to eradicate invasive species, creating instantaneous suspicion and conflict, and initiating battles with frustrated and angry landowners, is not the best strategy.

Warrantless entry is also a fundamental breach of Canada's Charter of Rights protection against unreasonable search and seizure. Police officers must obtain a warrant, barring exigent circumstances, to enter private property, even in the pursuit of a suspected murderer. Why, then, are bylaw officers, provincial enforcement officers or even charitable organizations given power-of-entry authority onto private property? Do they have superior training to police? Are they less likely than police to abuse their power? As observed by Peter Jaworski of the Institute for Liberal Studies, it is perverse to say that because the stakes, i.e. the punishments, are less, the protection against unreasonable search and seizure should be discarded.

Increasingly, we are witnessing the creation of laws focused on accommodating the public service—focused on their convenience versus accommodating and protecting the rights of residents.

In conclusion, even though I support the intent of the bill, which is to remedy the problem of invasive species—I will support this bill, but under protest, given the potentially significant adverse social and economic impacts on property owners and municipalities of warrantless entry and the lack of compensation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: As always, it's an honour to be able to stand in this House and speak on behalf of the residents of Timiskaming-Cochrane, and in this case, on behalf of my NDP caucus and many people in Ontario who have comments on Bill 37, An Act respecting Invasive Species.

I'd like to say from the outset that our caucus supports this bill, but not without some reservations. We all have

the same goal: to stop invasive species from damaging our natural wildlife, from damaging our economy, from damaging our way of life. We have to look at, also, the history of invasive species, because now we have—I guess the ones that come to mind: phragmites, the Asian carp. We have purple loosestrife, which we're still dealing with.

1620

Actually, if you take a walk in Queen's Park, in the park part of Queen's Park, there are a bunch of trees from other parts of the world, and they've got plaques on them saying where they're from. If you take the act too far, they could be invasive species. In my former life as a dairy farmer, the Holstein cow could be conceived of as an invasive species to North America. Obviously, we don't want to eradicate the trees in Queen's Park or Holstein cows. But we have to make sure that the act is comprehensive enough and flexible enough to make sure that, although those things sound ridiculous, other actions equally as ridiculous don't result from this act.

As I've often said in this House and will continue to say, it's easy to make regulations that appear to work wonderfully in these halls, but out in the country or in the suburbs or in the city might not work as well as we think they're going to.

So while we support the intent, there are a few parts in this bill that cause some concern. We're going to vote in favour. We can live with them. But we want to make sure they're on record that they're not definite enough, and that we have to, in the future, look forward to what the minister does or doesn't do with them.

This bill gives the Minister of Natural Resources an awful lot of power. In some cases, when you're dealing with an invasive species, when a species that's unknown to the province is invading your territory, the minister needs power. We're not disputing that. But power is dangerous.

If you look at the bill, 15(1), on who is qualified to be an inspector—"The minister may appoint a person or class of persons as inspectors for the purposes of this act"—it says nothing about how qualified these people are or what organizations they belong to. That's a problem.

In 15(2): "An enforcement officer is an inspector for the purposes of this act by virtue of his or her office." We're in favour of that. We have conservation officers who are very good at their job, who know native species, who know introduced species, who know invasive species. They're good at their job.

In my riding, we've got 50 townships that are patrolled by two conservation officers. I think it would be a better idea if, instead of giving the minister—"appoint a person or class of persons as inspectors for the purposes of this act"—to actually say in the act that the minister should make sure that there are enough conservation officers in the province to make sure they can handle the new powers given under this act. That would be better. Right now, in many parts of this province, there are not enough conservation officers to control hunting laws. It's

easy, it's nice to make a new regulation, which we need, but we also have a duty to make sure that these regulations, which are very powerful, can actually be enforced; that if we have an invasion of a species, which happens—it has happened with the carp; it has happened with phragmites—that we actually have the professional capacity on the ground to deal with it.

Right now, judging by the capacity we have on the ground with the Ministry of Natural Resources on wild-life species, on nuisance bears and on a lot of other issues, it's questionable whether that capacity on the ground exists. Does it exist in theory? Probably. But does it actually exist in a fashion where we can actually react?

One thing that's happened in the past with the SPCA and quality care for animals is that we have people who are involved with animals, with farm animals, and they want to take care of them, and in some cases—not all cases; I don't want to paint with a broad brush. But we have had instances in my riding as well where people didn't have enough training for the powers that they were given, and that was a disservice to the owner of the animal, to the animal and, also, to the inspector who had the best interests of everyone at heart. We run the risk of doing this again, because we don't have the quality of people, the amount, the number—we don't have the number of trained people in the province right now to enforce the powers that are here right now, before we pass this act. So after this act is passed, these people are going to have even less time. So that's a big consideration.

I flip to another section of this act—it's on page 29—29(1). It's regarding compensation. With invasive species, it could very well be that a landowner has an invasive species—and there's two or three different quantifications of species here in this act, and I'm not going to get into that. But it could very well be that a landowner has an invasive species on his property that is discovered, and it's deemed that it needs to be destroyed. That's a loss to the landowner. The landowner himself or herself wasn't responsible for bringing that species there. So this act talks about compensation, and that's a good thing, because it's happened in the past that society wants to make a decision for society, but an individual pays for society's decisions. What happens there, Speaker, is that the results you want from the act don't happen.

That happens with another act: endangered species—very different legislation. In that case, a landowner, if he has an endangered species, often isn't compensated, so as a result the endangered species becomes more than endangered. That's because the Endangered Species Act looks great on paper, but it isn't as good as it could be if it actually worked with the landowner. So at least this act recognizes that there are cases where, when society wants to make a decision for the betterment of society, for the betterment of all Ontarians, all Ontarians should help pay for the betterment. I think it's a step in the right direction. As all acts, it could be more prescriptive, but the fact that compensation is mentioned in the regulations is a good thing.

I'd like to return to the fact that the minister can decide, after we pass this act, who is actually the inspector. There are a lot of powers. You can go, warrantless, on people's property. You can't go in their dwelling; according to this act, the inspector needs a warrant to go into the dwelling, but no warrant to go into the rest of the—now, I'm a farmer, so I'm thinking of a farm. I don't know what kind of invasive species could be in a barn, but if an inspector decided that there is a risk of an invasive species being in someone's barn, they could just trot right into that barn without a warrant, despite biosecurity protocols that that farm would have in place, despite rules like that. That's worrisome, because, with this act, we don't know what training those people will have.

1630

A conservation officer—different story. Conservation officers are well trained. I don't think everyone in the province always agrees with some of their interpretations, but they are well trained. So we have a lot less problem with the conservation officer because we know what their training is, we know what their background is, we know what their purpose is.

But the part where the minister “may appoint”—it doesn't prescribe what qualifications the person has. So you can appoint someone to go warrantless in your farm buildings when the owner doesn't know what the qualifications are. That's a problem with this act, and I think that's something that we have to be very careful and cognizant of as we proceed.

In closing, we are in favour of this act. I, personally, would really like to encourage the government to actually make sure that there's enough horsepower on the ground to enforce the laws we have now regarding species—endangered species, wildlife species and now invasive species—because, right now, it's not there. We need to make sure that laws and rules and regulations that we talk about here actually work in the field, in the forest, in our beautiful lakes and rivers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Just before I continue along with further debate, breaking parliamentary protocol, the score, the last I heard, was 4-0, Kansas City over the Jays.

Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm glad to stand up and speak on third reading of Bill 37, the Invasive Species Act. I was happy to speak during second reading of Bill 37. I, at the time, talked quite a bit about the deficiencies in the bill, as I should as the opposition member, and hopefully during committee time the government would take heed of the notations I made during my debate and possibly affix any amendments to the bill. I'll be discussing that further on down the road, but, first, I am glad Bill 37 has reached third reading. It has been over a year since it was first introduced by the government. Before that, it was introduced in a previous form in their previous term as government, and unfortunately, it hadn't made its way into law yet.

I know Ontario is in desperate need of some sort of organization in order to deal with the invasive species

that are occurring throughout Ontario today. Particularly, we look at Asian carp, and the member from Haldimand-Norfolk has been a champion on dealing with the Asian carp invasion throughout our province. We've seen a few of the carp making it into our waterways. That's quite a concern when you look at the devastation these fish can cause our environment. Unfortunately, I had hoped that, two years ago, when the government first brought out this bill, it would have been a priority for them to pass it and get it into legislation so perhaps we could have prevented some of the problems coming forth with Asian carp.

I know the federal government did their job when, over a year ago, they introduced changes to invasive species in the waterways and, in addition to taking care of ballast water, they introduced a bunch of new regulations that would help to battle the Asian carp. But ideally, we need the province on board in order to deal with the tragedy that may occur if the Asian carp does, in fact, join our waterways, particularly in our Great Lakes.

I also want to talk about phragmites, Mr. Speaker, and the potential phragmites plays in destroying our wetlands, destroying our farmland and destroying any waterways that we may have throughout our cities. I'm proud to say, in my riding, in St. Thomas, David Collins, who's the chair of the St. Thomas Phragmites Control Committee, has been hard at work trying to control phragmites within St. Thomas. They have a goal of, by 2020, St. Thomas becoming phrag-free, and they're well on their way to the goal. I'm sure if this bill is in place, it would enhance the ability for them to attain their goal—and in general, getting access to the necessary chemicals they need in order to fight phragmites.

I'm sure that everyone knows at home what phragmites is: It's that tall, weedy-looking grass that we see every day on the sides of the 400-series highways growing up. I always wondered why nobody was cutting the grass, but it's the phragmites. Their root structure is tremendously huge. It goes through and kills other vegetation along the way. Usually it grows in wet areas; that's why it's always in ditches. Unfortunately, it's such an invasive species that nothing else survives in its potential to grow.

The inability for local farmers and groups such as the St. Thomas Phragmites Control Committee to access the necessary chemicals to deal with phragmites has been terrible. We need safe chemicals, of course—they have to be able to use them in waterways in order so that it doesn't kill our waterways but kills the weed. The necessary way to treat the phragmites is usually in the fall—you nail them in the fall and then again in the spring, and hopefully they don't regrow.

If you don't treat phragmites, which is potentially a problem—we look at Long Point conservation area, which is bordering my riding but, again, into Haldimand-Norfolk's area—the wetlands, the places where ducks live, where they migrate to and from, are being taken over by phragmites. It's definitely an invasive species that needs to be taken control of.

We've seen the effects of phragmites overgrowth already. If you look at Harsens Island, which is on the American side of the St. Clair River, and you look at Walpole Island, which is on the Canadian side—massive fires from phragmites overgrowth. That's the downside of phragmites: It's such a dry plant that it burns up quite like an inferno and quite quickly. Harsens Island was almost burnt to the ground a few years back because phragmites caught fire. The fire department had the boats out trying to control the fire, and it took quite a bit; the same with Walpole Island.

I'm glad Bill 37 has finally made it to third reading. I'm hoping the government can implement this in a timely manner going forward once it is passed, because we've made note that we are supportive of it. Of course, the government, being the majority, will pass it. This brings me back to my concerns, and I'll just reiterate my concerns that we had during the initial reading of this bill:

Public consultation: This bill, again, has had little public consultation from its development. As I said, it has been two sessions of the Legislature. You'd think, when they took the time after the last election, before re-introducing it, they could have had plenty of time to have the proper consultations that certain groups felt they were excluded from, and made the changes to the bill and reinstate it. Obviously, the government wasn't in that much of a rush to get this bill passed; it's pretty close to a year since they introduced it. They could have probably put it off a month or two after having proper consultations.

We find that this bill is very reactive and not proactive. It's harder to deal with a problem once it's already situated in the province. It's better to deal with a situation before it comes in. That is taking an approach—and I got this idea from Ontario Nature, which is an organization which is deeply invested in our environment: to use the pathways approach, which basically outlines what an invasive species is before it hits Ontario, much like they've done down in New Zealand, where they put the necessary precautions in place to stop the invasive species from coming in.

Right now what's going to happen with this bill is, we will have a strategy to deal with invasive species, but we wait until they come and affect our environment. We had hoped the government would have taken a science-based approach of determining what should be prevented from entering the province so it doesn't become an invasive species.

We've also dealt with the information with landowners—downloading the responsibilities to landowners. Who is going to pay for what? Is the government going to have access to woodlots, to simply walk in and clear-cut a woodlot without even talking to the landowner? Under this legislation, that can happen. We kind of wish the wording would have been changed and some sort of compensation would have been in place for the landowners, not only so they don't get stuck with the bill for MNR coming in and clear-cutting, but to compensate

them for the damage that would be done—and hoping to redevelop the land that the government is going to walk in and destroy.

1640

We brought forth many amendments to this bill. It's pages and pages of amendments. I'll tell you what: Not one amendment was approved by this government. It's unfortunate that a government that is wanting to work with the opposition, wanting to make a better Ontario, thinking that we can all work together but, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, there was nothing accepted in amendments on the PC side. Again, this government says one thing and does another.

Hopefully, as we go forward—we have two and a half years left to work together for the betterment of Ontario, and I'm hoping, come committee time and when other bills come forward, that when we have a discussion of possible amendments they will listen to us and possibly make some passes.

As I said earlier, I've talked to many groups regarding Bill 37. We do still have our concerns with the bill; we're going to support the legislation, because invasive species—we do need a strategy from the government to help landowners and to help groups that want to deal with invasive species—like phragmites, like I mentioned—so that they have access to the tools that are necessary for them to ensure that the spread of these invasive species is minimized.

We hope the government will go forward and expand upon the Invasive Species Act, going further; maybe they can stick in regulations that we start looking at creating a list using science-based evidence of what we can restrict from coming into this province—much like New Zealand has, as I mentioned earlier—creating a system that protects our environment so that we're proactive and not reactive.

Thank you again, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to have the opportunity to make further comments on Bill 37. I look forward to hearing from everyone else.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: May I, at this time, take the opportunity to congratulate the newest member from Windsor—Tecumseh in the House of Commons: Cheryl Hardcastle, a former deputy mayor in the town of Tecumseh, who, by the way, is very active on the environmental file and invasive species. Also in the riding of Essex: Tracey Ramsey has taken over the riding of Essex for the New Democrats, and we're very pleased about that, down in our neck of the woods, in the great southwest.

Speaker, it's a pleasure to stand here today and be the voice of the residents of the riding of Windsor—Tecumseh. It's always an honour to stand in this House and take part in the debate, but when we're talking invasive species, it really hits home because, down in our neck of the woods, we're a part of the Great Lakes river system—the St. Lawrence River system, if you will. It extends all the way up through, starting at our 100 Mile

Peninsula, if you will, down around the Pelee peninsula or south Detroit, whatever you want to call us.

We are very familiar with the history of the invasive species on the Great Lakes. If you go back to the 1970s, I can recall the big debate over the sea lamprey eel at that time. The sea lamprey got into the Great Lakes. It was eating a lot of the fish—many good fish. Then I think that was followed by the spiny water flea, the round goby, zebra mussels, purple loosestrife and the emerald ash borer.

I remember being on city council for seven years, and we had to deal with the first hit in Ontario of the emerald ash borer. It cost us millions of dollars, because we lost thousands of trees, trees that used to be on our boulevards and in our parks system and on our great streets. You have to take them down, Speaker, when the emerald ash borer gets into the ash trees, because they weaken them. You can't leave them up because, in high winds, they'll come down. They'll come down on cars; they'll come down on homes; they'll come down on children playing in the parks, if the emerald ash borers attack the trees that are in our city parks.

Right now, of course, the big war is over phragmites. Phragmites looks like a decorative grass, like the old, tall prairie grassland that we used to have in a great part of southwestern Ontario, but it isn't. It's an invasive species and it eventually will wipe out a large part of the vegetation.

I think the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane spoke about the patchwork of the 20 or so federal and provincial bills dealing with invasive species. At least this bill, the provincial bill, will put it all in one ministry, and that is long overdue.

The member from Timiskaming—Cochrane also talked about the number of inspectors that will be needed. Of course, if you're going to be hiring inspectors to keep track of all of these invasive species, you need money, and there's no money in the budget. In fact, the ministry is one of the ones that's getting a 6% cut, so where the inspectors who are going to police this new bill whenever it gets up and running are going to come from, I don't know.

When you talk about losing, say, a tree, such as an ash tree, and you think of the value of a tree, some people just take them for granted. But when you think, really, they're the lungs of the Earth and they improve the air that we breathe; they take the pollution out of the air. It's important to us in my part of the province, because the prevailing winds blow pollution from Michigan, Ohio, Indiana and Illinois; they blow that bad air from the coal-burning plants, the steel mills and so on into southwestern Ontario. So we need all the trees we can get.

I remember when I was on the Essex Region Conservation Authority, I planted hundreds and hundreds of trees every year. I was on the authority for seven years, chair for a year, vice-chair twice, and I planted a lot of trees, Speaker. That is so important, and I give full credit to the Essex Region Conservation Authority for all the work they do, let alone alerting us to invasive species but also

the planting of trees, not only to replace the ash trees that we've lost but all species of trees which help us breathe better air. I think that's a very important thing that we do.

Earlier today, the member from Windsor West and I presented a petition to the House. We're talking in this bill about invasive species, but the petition we presented has over 12,000—12,873 or something like that—names of people who are worried about protecting the land around the Ojibway Prairie Complex. That's a park system right on the river, right near the Detroit River, and it totals 332 hectares. It represents half of the city of Windsor's remaining natural areas.

We're talking invasive species, but at the Ojibway nature complex we have 160 species at risk. That's 20% of Ontario's species at risk and 32% of Canada's species at risk, and it's the world's and Canada's most endangered ecosystem. We have 4,000 species living on the site: over 700 plants, 100 of them rare; 3,000 insects; and, if you do a manual bird count, 233 bird species. We have breeding evidence, actual evidence, for 71 species. We also have 15 mammals. So as we talk about invasive species, we have to do more to protect the species that we have already who are at risk.

And where this park is, Speaker—I know you've been down around there, down around Windsor Raceway—has been designated as natural heritage. Environmentally significant areas are there. It's a provincially significant wetland right there and an area of natural and scientific interest. The way we protect biodiversity—it hosts 12 endangered species right there, so they want us to do more to protect what we have as we discuss the threat of invasive species coming in and the inspectors that we need for that.

When you have 91 species at risk, including six endangered and 12 threatened species under the Endangered Species Act, I think we have to do more to help those people in their petition drive, and I hope that the government will eventually see fit to do so.

1650

At various times in the last few weeks, we've been up talking about—let alone invasive species—the need to protect the Great Lakes. I think we're all pretty well on board, at least in the Liberals and the New Democratic Party, on protecting the Great Lakes—a bill that we are fully supportive of. As I say, when you live in that 100 Mile Peninsula and are bordered by water on three sides, you know the value of the Great Lakes.

We've seen the lakes used as a political football, and I hope that nobody uses this species-at-risk/invasive species bill as a political football. What we need more than anything else, I think, are some timelines to actually get some things done, some money in the bill to actually do everything that we want to do.

When I was talking about the threats to the Great Lakes not that long ago, Speaker, I brought to your attention the great Canadian author Pierre Berton. Pierre Berton wrote a coffee table book back a few years ago, about 20 years ago, called *The Great Lakes*. This great Canadian iconic author saw Lake Superior as “remorse-

less and masculine.” Lake Huron, to Mr. Berton, has 30,000 islands; it reminded Mr. Burton of “a fussy maiden aunt,” while Lake Michigan, half wild to the north and heavily industrialized in the south, he saw as “an errant uncle.” Pierre Berton said that Lake Erie “is a wilful ingenue of changeable mood and false promise.” As you know, Speaker, Mr. Berton lived in Toronto, and when he looked out at Lake Ontario, he saw Lake Ontario as “a complacent child.”

We recognize the value of the Great Lakes, but we know that invasive species can easily get into the Great Lakes. We've all heard in recent weeks, months and years of Asian carp and the threat of Asian carp getting into the lakes and destroying the species that we have now that thrive in the Great Lakes.

I know the federal member for Windsor West, Brian Masse—congratulations, Brian, by the way, on your victory last night, a resounding victory in Windsor West—has been talking at the federal level about the threat of Asian carp and the need to, if you catch them, eviscerate them before you can ship them. If you get these carp and they get away and get into the lakes and propagate, we're going to have a real problem.

Brian Masse has also made a big deal out of a lot of the other things that threaten the Great Lakes, such as those minuscule little plastic beads that you don't really see, but they're there in our toothpastes and shampoos and so on.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Microbeads.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Microbeads; yes, thank you. The member from Nickel Belt is right on when she says “microbeads,” because they're very, very small, Speaker, as you know.

They're getting into the fish, and it's becoming very hazardous. Those of us who like fish—I grew up on the east coast, and my grandfather, my mother's father, made his living as a fisherman back in the day. When he was a boy, he would get on a schooner and go out in the middle of the Atlantic. They'd put him in a little dory and he'd row out, put his cod trap out, put his net out, and catch the cod, then try to find the schooner. Sometimes, in the fog, it was difficult, or in terrible, terrible weather.

As a child, I used to enjoy summer vacation, getting into a little dory with my grandfather and jigging codfish or jigging squid. I remember one time we filled the little dory right up to the gunnels with squid. Nobody of his generation ate squid; they used it as a bait to put on the hook to catch cod. But those were the days where I had a great appreciation of nature, of water and of fish, so when I came up here to the Great Lakes—I get nervous when people talk about invasive species and how invasive species, if you allow them in, can take right over. We've seen, as you know, on the east coast, the decimation of the cod industry, where now in Newfoundland, you normally get out once in the spring and once in the fall for a couple of weeks to actually do what we used to do every day down there, just go out and catch your dinner.

When we talk about the importance of invasive species, I think we really—no matter where we live in

this great province. Wherever we live, be it in the Far North or, where I am, in the deep south, east or west, you have to take seriously any threat of the species. If you have invasive species coming in, be it in the water, be it in the air, be it in the trees, we have to take it very seriously.

This bill is a good step in a lot of those directions. I think we have to do what we can to protect what we have, and this bill does that, although it doesn't go all that far enough. There isn't enough money in there to do everything that it purports to do. As the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane was talking about, the accreditation of the inspectors that are needed—we haven't really nailed that one down yet.

I just think we have to do more. I think the bill is worth supporting, especially when you look at some of the fines that may be imposed—a maximum fine of \$250,000 for individuals and imprisonment of up to a year, and actually for corporations it could be \$1 million. If you have a fish store and you're bringing in Asian carp and you get caught, you could be facing \$1 million. I think that would put most of us out of business.

I will say, if we haven't already talked about it, that the bill does have the support of the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, the Ontario Forest Industry Association and the Ontario Invasive Plants Council, but some of those agencies do say that more funding is needed.

Thank you for your time this afternoon. I hope all members of this House will take this very seriously, and the bill is certainly worth supporting.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Robert Bailey: Just off the get-go—a couple of other people have done so—I'd like to acknowledge Marilyn Gladu, the new federal member-elect in my riding of Sarnia-Lambton, newly elected last evening. I'm looking forward to working with her through my provincial office. I know she'll do an excellent job for the electors and for the constituents of Sarnia-Lambton.

With that out of the way, I'm also pleased to rise and speak to Bill 37, the Invasive Species Act. We understand the impact that invasive species can have on our environment, whether it's our lakes, our wetlands or our forests. We also understand how difficult they are to control, when they can enter the province through so many different methods and in so many locations: through lakes and rivers, like the Asian carp; through the air; through boating; through the transportation of raw wood and other forest products; through importing products made from animals. There are plants, fish and insects, such as the emerald ash borer beetle and the Asian long-horned beetle.

It is a complicated issue that should have had extensive debate and committee hearings. That's why when I spoke to this bill on second reading, I asked the government to hold committee hearings in different parts of the province to ensure that we were hearing from everyone who had a role to play in protecting Ontario from in-

vasive species, and to hold a committee meeting in the north to make sure that we were hearing from the forest industry.

In 2014, the port of Hamilton handled more than 10.5 million tonnes of liquid, dry and break bulk cargo. Shouldn't the committee have gone there to hear from them? The Windsor-Detroit gateway is Canada's busiest land border crossing. Shouldn't the committee have gone to hear from them? And Sarnia-Lambton as well—the second-busiest border crossing. In fact, when they spoke at the hearing, the Ontario Invasive Plants Council recommended developing six to 10 regional plans to prevent invasive species from entering this great province. Shouldn't people in those regions have had an opportunity for input?

Instead, last June, the government moved a motion which limited committee hearings to two days, and with the way in which they structured the motion, it forced both of those hearings to be here in Toronto. So instead of travelling to hear from the people who should be part of the fight against invasive species and who will be impacted by this bill, the committee listened to the people of Toronto.

1700

In fact, Robert Whiteside from the Current River Hydro Partnership tried to have his voice heard and to present to the committee by telephone, but the connection was so bad that he asked my colleague the member for Carleton-Mississippi Mills to deliver a letter to the committee later on his behalf. He had concerns with the definition of invasive species, but by that point, the government's time allocation motion wouldn't allow any more amendments. Some organizations were so limited on time and had so much more to say that the members on the committee gave up their time to allow these organizations to speak.

Limiting debate and opportunities for these organizations to participate is not listening as the people of Ontario are having conversations, as this government promised. Instead of advertising in regional papers to ensure that different organizations and people had a chance to provide input and make this bill better, the government limited notice to the Ontario parliamentary channel, the Legislative Assembly's website and Canada NewsWire. And instead of allowing all parties to work together in committee to create the best of amendments, the government prohibited new amendments during clause-by-clause.

The Ontario Invasive Plant Council said during committee hearings that "the act does little to engage the majority of Ontario's organizations that have direct interest in control of invasive species, and does little to provide tools that will control unlisted species or tie together a collaborative, integrated approach." They also asked to have municipalities more involved.

In their presentation, Forests Ontario said that "efforts must be made to develop collaborations to assist in the implementation of invasive species programs."

We put forward amendments that would have made this bill more collaborative, so that it was working with the owners of the land rather than punishing them. We put forward an amendment to try to make decisions more science- or evidence-based, which the government blocked. We put forward an amendment to prevent warrantless entry—which the member for Carleton-Mississippi Mills spoke about earlier, and the member from the third party—which, again, the government blocked.

I know that there are many people in the Legislature who don't understand the unintended impact of this clause on things like biosecurity on our farms. Our livestock is impacted by diseases that travel across borders, just like invasive species. I want to commend the farmers on the steps that they take to reduce the spread of these diseases and to protect their livestock. Over the last couple of years, farmers in my area of southwestern Ontario have dealt with PED and H5N2 avian influenza. One of the ways that these diseases spread is on the clothing, footwear and vehicles of visitors to the farms. An employee from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry travelling farm to farm to look for an invasive species could accidentally contribute to the spread of these diseases if they don't follow the biosecurity protocols.

Farmers themselves are taking preventative measures to prevent diseases from spreading, such as building truck washes, but in order to be successful, they also need control over who visits their property. That's why it's important that no one is simply granted access to private property; instead, they should have to get permission, so there's an opportunity to have that conversation, an opportunity for the farmer to explain why it's important to change his footwear, or for the farmer to prevent the employee from visiting after being on an infected farm.

We made this point during second reading debate, and it appears that the government chose not to listen. This is a government that once boasted about having conversations, but now, our entire third reading conversation on this complex issue is limited to two—count them; two—hours divided among three parties. The government time-allocated this bill after only three days of debate: one day per month, March, April and May. Let's put that in context. The government reintroduced this bill last December, so in six months, they only chose to call the bill for three days, and then felt it was necessary to time-allocate it to get it through.

The timing of that motion meant that the government couldn't call the bill until this September, some nine months after it was first introduced. They didn't make it a priority to debate the bill, and then forced it through, with limited committee hearings and debate. If they had chosen to call it for additional days of second reading last spring, maybe they could have spent time travelling last summer to hear from the people who have been impacted or will be impacted. They could have gone to the north to listen to the forestry industry. They could have gone to

border cities like Windsor, Niagara, Samia and Cornwall. They could have given those organizations more time to express their concerns.

The people who will be impacted by this bill deserve better. The people who are impacted by invasive species deserve better. Our environment deserves better. It's something that we often hear from stakeholders: that they want to be part of the solution. They want an opportunity to share their concerns and they want government to listen. We've heard from stakeholders who say they used to have those opportunities, but now they don't. We've heard from stakeholders who are frustrated that the government seems to charge ahead without giving people and organizations that will be impacted the opportunity to have meaningful input.

Even though they're forcing this bill through, I hope the government will take the time to reach out to those stakeholders as they implement the bill to make sure it works. For the future, I hope the government will the importance of hearing from people outside Toronto: people from Oxford, people from Samia-Lambton, Niagara, London, Windsor, Ottawa, Cornwall—both from MPPs who represent those areas and, through travelling committees, from the people directly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm glad to have a few minutes to talk about Bill 37, An Act respecting Invasive Species.

As you know, Speaker, I represent a northern rural riding, the riding of Nickel Belt. I can tell you that, throughout my riding, forestry was a great industry. When you talk about invasive species, the first thing that comes to mind, the one that all Canadians have followed, had to do with the mountain pine beetle and the damage that it did to the forest industry in British Columbia.

Of course, you can find those invasive species—the mountain pine beetle could easily have been found in the boreal forests of Nickel Belt, so it is extremely important that we have a monitoring system in place, that we have a good preventative system in place in order that the devastation that has happened in British Columbia does not repeat itself in Nickel Belt, or anywhere else in Ontario, for that matter. The boreal forest is something for all of us to share, and we know that an invasive species can destroy a great part of a boreal forest in no time flat.

I, like both of my colleagues who have spoken before me, am worried that there are no resources attached to this bill. In order for people on the ground, boots on the ground, to do the monitoring, to do the science, to do the inspection, you need to have people on the ground. Those people are going to be part of MNR, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry.

Let me tell you, Speaker: During constituency week, I had the pleasure to meet with a representative of MNR in my riding, like I do on a regular basis. The first thing we talked about was trapping minnows. Lots of people in my riding make a living with a bait-and-tackle shop. They trap minnows and sell them to anglers and fishermen, and they make a good small business out of it. Well, the way

it works is that you get a township, you get an area, where you're allowed to trap minnows. MNR gives you the permit to trap minnows in an area. But the MNR is so backlogged—when you don't use your township any more, when you don't trap minnows any more, it is supposed to go back to MNR and be auctioned off. Now you can go on Google any time of the day, Speaker, and you will see that people who hold those licences are actually selling them to other people. That's not right. That's actually illegal, because the township—the right to harvest minnows is something that belongs to the crown, is something that is governed by MNR, but MNR is so under-resourced that they don't have time to make the system work the way it is. People have found out about it, and some people are making money doing things that shouldn't be happening, but MNR doesn't have the resources to stop them.

I talked to them about selling crown land. I mean, I've been an MPP for eight years, Speaker. Did you know that there are people who came and saw me the first week I was elected to tell me about the problem of buying crown land? They have a land use permit with the MNR. Their neighbours to the right and their neighbours to the left got to buy crown land. They're smack in the middle, and eight years later, Speaker, we still do not have a deal. Why? Because MNR does not have the resources to do its work, to seek the market value of the land that they're supposed to sell.

1710

Why am I talking about this, Speaker? Because the connection is direct: Do I want my province, my forests, to be protected from invasive species? Of course. Everybody does. We want our lakes to be healthy, we want our forests to be healthy, we want our environment to be healthy, but in order for that to happen you need to have boots on the ground. You need to have resources within the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry for this to happen, but right now, they don't have the resources to do the job that's already on their docket.

Let's talk about bears. I come from Nickel Belt. We had over 2,000 complaints against bears last summer. Most of them, the great majority of them, came from Nickel Belt. When I sit down with the people from MNRF, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, it is clear that some of the decisions that were made back in 2009 when changes were brought in were directly linked to a lack of resources. As the resources from MNR—it wasn't MNRF at the time, it was just MNR—were squeezed out, they made decisions that have a direct impact as to the thousands of bear complaints that we've had in our community.

What could ever lead us to believe—lead me to have confidence—that MNR suddenly will find, within their own resources, boots on the ground to make sure that Bill 37 is actually carried out? Because right now, for me, Bill 37 is wishful thinking. It is motherhood and apple pie. Do we want to protect ourselves against invasive species? I don't know too many people who would say, "Oh, no, Speaker. We don't want to protect ourselves

against invasive species." Of course we do. The support is there. It could have been done way better, and my colleagues have talked about this, and certainly colleagues from the PC Party have also talked about how we could be more sensitive to protecting private landowners from those measures. But none of this is possible if there are no resources.

I'm here at Queen's Park. I look at what kind of resources were allocated in the budget in order to carry out this new bill that everybody thinks is a great idea. Well, the response is not only do we have zero allocation of new resources, we actually have a cut to that ministry. So that ministry that cannot do a good job with the township allocation for minnow trapping, this ministry that cannot do a good job at selling crown land because they don't have the resources, this ministry that cannot do a good job at handling bear complaints when it comes to the safety of our residents is going to be tasked with even more responsibility.

Speaker, this being the fall season—one of my favourite seasons, right after winter—it's hunting season. If you come from Nickel Belt, it doesn't matter where you go in Nickel Belt, everybody is with the NDP. No, not really; they're wearing orange because they're hunting, but it looks like they're with the NDP, doesn't it? It does. Everywhere you go, people are wearing orange. If it's not the hat, it's the jacket, the pants, the whole—it's because they're hunters.

There are hunters throughout my riding, Speaker, and, if you look, the story is pretty sad. There were very few moose tags allocated in Nickel Belt this year for reasons based on science, and all of that was explained to me. But look at the scenario here, Speaker. You have people who have paid to be in a draw for 30 years in a row, 25 years in a row, 20 years in a row, and never got a tag. They have entire hunting parties that have no tags for moose. A tag is what you need to be able to go hunting for a moose, and it will tell you if you can harvest a cow, if you can harvest a bull or if you can harvest a baby moose. But if you have no tag, you can't. For all the areas around Gogama, which right now has more NDP-like, but really, hunters dressed in orange per square mile than you can shake a stick at, there is one conservation officer. So you're talking hundreds of hunters with all sorts of different calibre rifles walking through the forests, some of them bird hunting, some of them hunting rabbits—it's kind of cute right now, because we have no snow on the ground. We had a little bit, but not much snow on the ground in Nickel Belt, but the rabbits have already shed their fur, so they're already kind of in the process of going from brown to white. They're pretty easy to see when they're wearing that white fur coat because the temperature has changed and their coat has changed, but there is no snow on the ground. They make easy targets.

All this to say that I have a lot of hunters throughout Nickel Belt going about their business, some of them are really unhappy that they did not get a tag for a moose or a deer, and are not able to go hunting. Then they look at it

and say, "Really, what is my chance of being caught? We only have one—a very good one, don't get me wrong—conservation officer. We have hundreds of kilometres of forest. What if I take a chance?"

Then poachers start. We have those great posters that say, "Report a poacher." What does that mean? That means that we haven't got enough conservation officers within MNR to do their job, to make sure that the hunters are respectful of the tags you've given them and of the different laws.

Here's another law that I will support and everybody else in my caucus will support. This responsibility will fall on the shoulders of the MNR, and MNR is already—how I can say it?—under-resourced to the point where it is really hard for them to discharge their responsibility successfully. People know that. They know this, and it's a real shame.

So I'm all in support for Bill 37, but right now all it is words on paper.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and happy belated birthday to you, sir—a very big milestone last Wednesday, I'm told.

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's 65 bigs.

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: "Senior" big—he's an official senior. He's looked it for years but now he's caught up.

It is a pleasure to speak to Bill 37, An Act respecting Invasive Species. I want to bring forward a number of comments on behalf of colleagues, both from our party, but more importantly from my constituents from the great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. I want to start off by acknowledging the efforts of my caucus colleague and the member for Haldimand-Norfolk, Toby "The Duke" Barrett, who has been an advocate—and a very vocal advocate—on this file for many years.

In fact, I think Toby was probably the first to identify the Asian carp issue. He has been consistent, persuasive and determined to bring the threat of Asian carp forward to this government's attention and to seek immediate action to stop it from invading our waters. It is a very big threat and we need to be all eyes, all hands on deck, pardon the pun—paying attention.

I also want to congratulate my colleague from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound Larry Miller on his re-election. Larry brought out a bill—although not invasive species—called C-383, the Transboundary Waters Protection Act. Again, all about water: We are surrounded in our great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound by the Great Lakes, so obviously, anything to do with water is of paramount concern to us and to the livelihoods and, most importantly, the health of our constituents going forward.

As I have shared, my constituency is part of the Great Lakes communities, and we see first-hand the damage our waters sustain and the threats to our lifestyle as a result of those concerns. From invasive species to falling

water levels, all of these can seriously hurt local businesses and tourism.

Just a couple of things: the 28th Salmon Spectacular fishing derby, organized by the Sydenham Sportsmen's Association and the Bruce Peninsula Sportsmen's Association. It's a huge, huge event that brings thousands of people to our community, and it's a great opportunity for people to be able to go out and fish and enjoy the Great Lakes waters in our backyard. The 31st Chantry Chinook classic fishing derby: again, a great fishing derby right in our backyards, closer to my colleague Lisa Thompson from Huron-Bruce, but again, it provides a lot of economic spinoff, a lot of great enjoyment, and brings a lot of people back to the waters to be able to enjoy their time.

Last year, falling lake levels grounded the Chi-Cheemaun ferry for a period of time. Again, a whole different challenge with our waters, but I'd like to actually extend appreciation to my colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin, Michael Mantha, and the current cabinet Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Michael Gravelle, who then was in MNR. We worked collaboratively and we were able to work on that to get some challenges taken care of that allowed the Chi-Cheemaun to sail, which again has huge economic impact on my riding certainly and that of Algoma-Manitoulin, on Manitoulin Island.

1720

Just as that one came back—the levels have come back to a more normal level—now, of course, one of the biggest concerns we have is the threat of invasive species like phragmites—a big, big concern. In 2014, I was involved with the Stop the Drop campaign with Colin Dobell. As I mentioned, now they've turned their attention as an organization to the phragmites. If you drive virtually anywhere in the province, you're seeing it. It's very invasive. It starts here and it actually starts choking out any other plant life around it. You really have to get down—I was fortunate enough to go to an overview from the national parks staff from the peninsula and they shared this: that you really have to go right down and tear these things out by the roots to be able to get these out of there. It's very challenging, and very much they encroach and take over all other plant life.

We need to encourage the public to take action to protect our shoreline from the phragmites invasion—they are like Asian carp—they just have roots and are very challenging to get rid of. They grow up to five metres tall and can grow even through asphalt. There is no doubt that invasive species present ecological and economic threats.

We also have threats from the emerald ash borer, an invasive species that has killed thousands of ash trees throughout southern Ontario. Again, it's one of these things where people may inadvertently grab some of that wood in more southern areas, like yours in Essex, and drive up to the beautiful Bruce Peninsula, bringing that wood that actually has the emerald ash borer. It very quickly spreads and is a challenge in all of those areas.

In our riding, Saugeen conservation provides landowners, businesses or municipalities an inoculation treatment. For \$500, you can buy a biological agent called TreeAzin to combat the emerald ash borer. It's estimated that this emerald ash borer will cost us over \$2 billion over a 30-year period. And we have yet to determine the ripple effects, which are the ecological impacts of ash tree mortality on aquatic organisms, birds and understory vegetation.

In Canada, invasive plants alone cost the farming and forest industries an estimated \$7.3 billion per year. As such, my constituents—there are people who are actually going to pay the freight and be most impacted by these types of bills. They're paying very close attention to this legislation and they've provided important feedback. While they applaud the government's efforts, they remain concerned with the manner in which some of these plans may be executed.

Number one, the bill does not outline a science-based approach to risk assessment and decision-making. One of the things I try to do when I come here is stick with policy but based on scientific fact. We've tried to do that with a number of things: through the environment, through neonicotinoids, through certainly the Green Energy Act. We try to rely on science to ensure that we're getting the best information we can from those experts, the scientific facts, and then make the policy decisions based on that.

Inspection powers: The bill is punitive—warrantless entries—and presents fairness issues. Again, we want to just ensure that, while good in intent, it's not allowing a heavy-handed person to go in and take actions that are not acceptable, particularly to the landowner, who may have inherited one of these invasive species with no real recourse at their end.

The act downloads responsibility of implementation to landowners, leaving little incentive for landowners to act. One of the concerns I've heard, particularly from farmers, is that if something happens—you know, a lot of these are small farming operations. If that invasive species ends up on their very specific piece of land and the government comes along and says, "You shall mitigate in this manner," many of those people don't have the resources, they don't have the ability, financial or otherwise, to be able to truly combat that and adhere to what the government's saying, even though they may want to do that. Again, most landowners, particularly farmers living on the water, living off the land, are stewards of the land, and they want to do what's right because it's their family, first and foremost, that they're worried about. They want to have the safest environment possible, but at the end of the day, if something comes onto their land and they have no ability to mitigate that and the government comes along, it can be very, very onerous, very stressful, and puts a lot of undue stress on them and their families. And what happens to the potential down the road for the younger children, the next generation to take over the family farm?

Number three, Ontario's enforcement officers are already under-equipped to adequately deal with existing

legislation. Many, many cuts to the MNR—for example, the MNR upended the long-time bear management program and downloaded this responsibility to police who are not trained in wildlife management. Again, I've heard lots of concerns of that in my riding. The bears have become an issue at certain times. OPP police officers go out and they're saying, "This isn't our area of expertise. This should really be the MNR."

We've had a lot of MNR conservation officers in our area—we used to have five or six. When I was a young man starting actually to hunt in the Bruce Peninsula, there were five or six just in our area of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. Now you're lucky to see one, Mr. Speaker. I know a retired conservation officer, Joel Tost, who fought this when he was still an officer. He was very concerned about the stewardship, the ability for him to truly do a good job, to enforce and ensure that the long-term sustainability of our fisheries, of our deer population, of all of our wildlife resources was going to be taken care of, but they continued to decline. People—I think my colleague from the north, France, said—

Interjection: Nickel Belt.

Mr. Bill Walker: Nickel Belt. Thank you. I always do the name. I apologize, Mr. Speaker.

The member from Nickel Belt was talking about boots on the ground. One of the big challenges is having boots on the ground to ensure they're working with the landowners, to be able to work with the organizations, like our sport fishing groups, to ensure that there are abilities for them to mitigate and be part of the solution and be hands-on.

The bill isn't perfect. It's a first step in tackling the invasive species threat and helping to benefit the health of our waters.

I just want to share a couple of other things in my last couple of minutes. We are the Great Lakes basin, and the threat of invasive species is significant to all of us. It's not just me in the beautiful Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound area—I encourage anyone out there who has never visited us to come. We truly are a paradise unto itself, surrounded by beautiful, glistening waters, but something like the Asian carp can wipe that out in a heartbeat, because it has such a negative impact on our economy—

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Tourism is important. It has a negative impact on tourism.

Mr. Bill Walker: Absolutely. The negative impact on tourism, as my colleague from Huron-Bruce said, who's a great member of this Legislature and truly stands up for the environment, certainly, and farming—big-time—but also tourism, because it is a huge part of our area. We have to have tourism to be able to thrive and survive going down the road.

We want to ensure, as I said earlier, that independent scientists are able to identify significant challenges and to be able to put in resolutions that we can all work to mitigate. We want to ensure that there isn't a heavy-handed scheme that is going to put undue challenges on innocent persons—again, someone who actually just happens to be the landowner. This invasive species ends

up on their property, and they have the whole responsibility to mitigate that. That's a challenge, and government needs to help support those and not totally download all of those costs on them.

The bill seems a bit rushed. I think one of my colleagues from Sarnia-Lambton—a very esteemed member, again—suggested that there was limited time for debate for this. They are rushing it through the House. I'm not certain the exact term that he used—really, they were shutting down debate or rushing debate through. We want to make sure these things, when may have such a significant impact on our whole province—our whole country, in fact—are actually done logically, thoroughly and with that scientific community involved.

There are not a lot of precautionary, preventive actions oriented with this bill; it's more reactive, after something gets in. Like health care, we want to be more proactive; we want to keep people healthy as opposed to always trying to fix them afterwards. No different here: We don't want to try to fix it once we allow Asian carp into our waters. We want to put regulations in place that absolutely ensures that Asian carp will not get in and decimate our great fishery.

We want to ensure that there are enough resources to handle the inspections. It's one thing to have a piece of legislation that says "you shall and you will," but if there aren't the boots on the ground to actually enforce and ensure the people are engaged and actually working collaboratively with you, then, again, it's really just a piece of paper. We want to ensure that it does not remove property rights from landowners. Actually, it inversely prevents the landowner from proactively dealing with invasive species.

We really, truly want to be able to support this, Mr. Speaker. I think that with lots of opportunity to have input, we can find some good legislation. I applaud Minister Mauro for bringing it forward as a first step.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Pursuant to the order of the House dated Tuesday, June 2, 2015, I am now required to put the question.

Ms. McMahon has moved third reading of Bill 37, An Act respecting Invasive Species. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I just received a deferral slip: "Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request that the vote on third reading of Bill 37 be deferred until deferred votes on Wednesday, October 21, 2015." It's signed by the chief government whip.

1730

Third reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Orders of the day?

STRENGTHENING AND IMPROVING GOVERNMENT ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LE RENFORCEMENT ET L'AMÉLIORATION DE LA GESTION PUBLIQUE

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 7, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 85, An Act to strengthen and improve government by amending or repealing various Acts / *Projet de loi 85, Loi visant à renforcer et à améliorer la gestion publique en modifiant ou en abrogeant diverses lois.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): When this item of business was last debated, the member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry had the floor, with time remaining. I recognize the member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: It's a privilege, of course, to get up in the House to talk about an initiative that I think is very much—I would hope that it's well intentioned. It's An Act to strengthen and improve government by amending or repealing various Acts. It's something that's quite surprising when you look at the record of this government, but it's nice to see that at least they're taking the initiative to put something in writing. It looks like they intend to do something.

When you look at the number of acts that are actually involved here, it's a large number. It's a caretaker bill, for sure. I think we see the Provincial Offences Act, the Executive Council Act, the legislative act, the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act—that's an interesting one, because freedom of information is very difficult, with this government, to secure for the people, let alone the members of the Legislature—the Public Service of Ontario Act, the Proceedings Against the Crown Act, and the Ministry of Natural Resources and, I think, the Ministry of Transportation. So it's a caretaker bill. It's meant to clean up a number of issues. It touches health care, but I don't see in the bill where it's actually improving health care. To do that, you need to root out waste and to build a more patient-centric model of care.

We look at this government's record: eHealth, \$2 billion wasted; Ornge, another billion dollars. And what have we seen in Ornge? What have we seen happen to this government? Really, nothing. There's a police investigation going on to look at the mismanagement, but that has been going on almost since we got here. We really don't see anything happening. We've only scratched the surface. When we had the ability, through committee, to actually question this government, it seemed that everything was done to make sure we didn't find out what was happening.

The Green Energy Act: \$8 billion a year wasted.

These aren't our numbers. These are the numbers of the Auditor General's report from just a little over a year ago, issued, I think, on the day we rose for the winter session—maybe just a coincidence, but obviously

intended to be possibly forgotten before we came back in February.

We look at money being wasted. We mentioned eHealth. We still have no medical electronic records system in this province. We have other provinces that have gleaned theirs from pharmacists at no cost. We have no integrated system. Let's be serious; that's just the way it is.

In my riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, when I was the mayor of South Glengarry, at one of the conventions, the government was promoting a nurse practitioners' clinic. We went home, we applied; we weren't successful in the first round. There were about 10 to 12 clinics that were approved in the first round. We applied again, got a consultant in; we were successful in the second round. It's an important thing in our riding because there are many, many people with no doctors. We had an instance of one doctor who had retired due to health reasons and had well over 2,000 patients. They had no place to go. So the clinic, although late, was certainly important in our riding, and it was something that I think was well needed.

When we look through how the project was funded, it was fully funded by the province, and one would think, with the urgency—especially with one doctor for 2,000 patients, but, of course, many more residents in my riding with no doctor—that this would be an urgent process to move through. But it certainly was anything but a smooth process. Actually, it was almost like a circus. You take one step, you wait for approval, and you wait and you wait. The next step comes, and you wait again. The process was extremely long.

Of course, Ontario is a big province, but there's no question that common groups like these nurse practitioner clinics were all on the same—the first round was under way when the second one started, so you had about 20 of these that were under way. There was a lot of collaboration between them—"How are things going?"—and unfortunately, none of them were going well. So we would issue plans and wait.

It was interesting, because we had hired somebody in our riding who I guess was well suited to deal with the government—because it was quickly realized that most of the municipalities had provided seed money. Of course, the government knew that, so they were \$100,000, \$200,000 or \$300,000 in the hole, money they weren't supposed to provide, but there was no question that people wanted these clinics. That was just part of the strategy.

In our case, when you'd be waiting for approval, she would call up and say, "We're out of money. We'll wait until you approve it, but this is my last day of work." Of course, the ministry, knowing that it would be a problem bringing things back up, knowing that the township was not going to fund more construction, would say, "Well, give us a day or two." And lo and behold, money would appear.

Look at the time and the waste and the energy of building these clinics that, of course, the government was

very much promoting as being in a rush to put up. It took about a year and a half. In our case, we were the second clinic in Ontario, I believe, to be opened. When you consider that there were 10 that started the year before us, you can imagine the waste and the time put into this.

But one of the things we had to deal with was the choosing of electronic records. The province gave us a list of 10 or 15. We had to go out and hire a consultant to evaluate them, to choose them. One would think there would be a standardized system. But \$10,000 or \$15,000 later, the consultant comes back with his recommendation, which was required for the funding. We go and we put the system in place, and six months later, the company is bankrupt and we have to start all over again.

You can imagine the number of institutions in this province that were using the same eHealth records and had to start from scratch again, go out and purchase new software, put it in and do the training. That's just an example of when you don't have an integrated eHealth system. That's good governance, and we just don't see that here, and it's just money that's wasted and gone.

In my riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, that's the biggest issue that we have. We want good governance, and good governance is efficient government that gets serious results for the money they put in. This is hard-earned money.

We have a rural area with farmers who are depending on the weather. They don't know what they're going to have from year to year. But they believe that a government should be able to have a procedure that's well documented so that they know what's happening. They're not dealing with the weather here. Putting records in, getting software development and IT—I mean, we just saw it with children's aid—another fiasco when it comes to IT—and it's just not showing a government that is showing much in the way of good governance.

When you go through this, it's just examples of waste with electronic records. BC has got a system, and they got it from the pharmacists. My understanding is that it was relatively free. So there are ways around it. There is off-the-shelf software. You don't have to build everything from scratch. I mean, if you look at project after project when it comes to IT, it's a failure with this government. So I don't think we want to get involved with anything to do with IT, because they just can't handle the projects.

I talked about my nurse practitioner clinic. Just after being elected here, back in 2012, we were called back because, if everybody remembers, in the summer we were having trouble with the teachers.

When I was on the board at the clinic, we had somewhere around 2,000 patients and a waiting list of about 800. There's still a waiting list today for our nurse practitioner clinic.

1740

I got a call from an agency in my riding saying that they were having problems with the clinic—"You better give them a call." Now, one would wonder why it would come through an outside agent and not the clinic itself, but of course there's that fear with our institutions—

Mr. Victor Fedeli: A culture of fear.

Mr. Jim McDonell: —that if they bring something to light that is embarrassing the government, they'll be penalized.

This was a case in September, almost; it was the 30th of August. They hadn't received any funding since March 31—approved budget; bank account was empty. They were in the process of having to lay people off. They didn't want to do that because that would be very disruptive. When I talked to the executive director, he said, "We haven't paid our hydro bills. We haven't paid everything—we can't pay, but we have to pay our wages. We consulted a lawyer, and if we don't pay them, the board is responsible."

So I was on my way to question period and I sent a note across saying, "How could this be?" I understand half the clinics in Ontario are in the same boat, if you can believe it. This is a bill to deal with good governance, and I don't see anything about this. So the minister comes over and says, "What's the problem?" I said, "They're out of money and they're issuing layoff notices and I don't think you're going to want that because it's going to be in the papers." So the comment was, "Well, it's probably their fault." And I said, "Well, maybe it is, but it's going to be in the papers." Ten minutes later, they're back: "The cheque is in the mail."

You can imagine the amount of money—there are probably 15 or 20 people there—that was tied up for six months. Why wouldn't it be flowing with an approved budget? To think the information was that half the clinics in Ontario are in the same boat, and it's something that nobody wants to talk about because if they bring it up, there is that culture of fear, as our member from Nipissing says. That's what we see in this government. People are afraid to say anything because they are told that it could be worse next year.

To go back to our meeting with Jim Wilson, the member from Simcoe—Grey, last year, that was something that the various agencies told us. They were warned. That doesn't seem like good governance. I don't think that would be something that our government would be very proud of, and I'm sure the official opposition would be in the same boat, but we hear that time and time again.

But you look at the various issues they've had with this government—the gas plant cancellation. Billions of dollars wasted and all about—I mean the first comments were a mere few million dollars, as if a few million dollars is not a big deal. It only became apparent through our committee work after filibustering. I sit on a committee, where I sat just in June, where this government filibustered so we couldn't receive our subcommittee meeting minutes, because they didn't want us to question Hydro One. Now, I'm not sure what was so important to our committee. My colleague here, Mr. Pettapiece, sits with us; they didn't want us asking questions, so they filibustered and we ran out of time. What were they trying to hide? Is that good governance? I don't think so.

The same thing happened through the gas plants, where a deal over the budget allowed summer hearings. It's funny; you can't filibuster for eight hours. The com-

mittee was able to request these records, and we see the results. We're not sure really what was in these records. We got many records, no question, but the question is, what records didn't we get? When you look at how important it was for this government to ensure we didn't get this information—they prorogued the House, resignations; this was serious stuff. With a new leader in place, the first actions we see are more records deleted, more police investigations.

When we talk about good governance, I see a bill here and I really wonder what it's all about. It's another name. It's like two weeks ago when we were discussing the cessation of coal in power stations. We're not burning coal anymore. Have we not got more important legislation? We have 300,000 manufacturing jobs that have left this province and we're dealing with legislation that obviously is more around the title than it is the substance, unless there's legislation we don't know about that is going to burn more coal. That's something that we see all the time. It's all about substance, but we really don't see, in the end, anything that's really going to improve the situation in this province.

I look forward to more debate on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Indeed, it's another pleasure to stand in the House this afternoon and bring the concerns of the good residents in Windsor—Tecumseh to the attention of this House, and to make comments on those made by my good friend from Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry. I certainly enjoyed my time down in his part of the province at the plowing match this year. It was a great opportunity to see what was going on within the farming community.

I listened very intently to what the member had to say, Speaker. He talked about the police investigation and the Ornge air ambulance scandal. He talked about the scandal with eHealth. He talked about some issues that he had with a clinic in his riding. He also talked about the gas plant cancellation, that scandal that cost more than a billion dollars.

Bill 85 is to improve the way the government does its business. What's missing from this bill is wording to the effect that the government, in order to do its business better, will listen intently to what the opposition says, because there just might be a little kernel of something in there that they could use to learn a few things and that might improve the way the government does its business. But I don't see anything in this bill that's going to lead me in that direction.

Speaker, as you know, as you have heard many times in this chamber, there is no harm in admitting to a mistake. If someone makes a mistake, just stand up and say, "We're going in the wrong direction. We shouldn't be going there." So let's stop the sale of Hydro One. Let's stop the sale right now because 80% of the people in Ontario don't want it sold, including representatives of more than 175 municipalities. That's the way the government can improve the way it does its business around here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: It's my pleasure, Speaker, to join my colleague from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry and my colleague from Windsor–Tecumseh in this conversation about an important piece of legislation. It's always a pleasure to stand up and speak on behalf of the great citizens of Burlington, especially when it comes to legislation like this.

It's hard to figure why anybody would disagree with a set of legislative amendments that seek to improve government's effectiveness, and that's exactly what this bill purports to do. How can anyone quibble with legislation that really is housekeeping changes that bring existing statutes into line, if you will, and some of the—when I look at this bill, Speaker, some of the details include things like amendments to the Family Law Act that will ensure that the new administrative child support service is as effective as possible in assisting children to receive appropriate levels of financial support from their parents. To me, that sounds like an ultimately incredibly reasonable and smart thing to do.

One of the things that I love to do, as an MPP, when I'm meeting with my constituents, is help them understand how to better navigate government. It seems to me that a piece of legislation like this one that seeks to make our jobs easier—also to hold government to account—and to make us more effective in the exercise of our duties, is very good legislation indeed. So I am appreciating this opportunity to take part in the debate.

One of the other amendments, Speaker, that I noticed here was something called an amendment to the Courts of Justice Act that will help to effectively implement new federal family legislation in Ontario. Things like amending the City of Toronto Act—the proposed changes will make it easier for the TTC to expand their service to York region.

So, all in all, it's a clearing house of very important amendments to existing legislation, improving effectiveness.

I urge all members of the House to support this very important piece of legislation. It's a pleasure to speak to it, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It's a pleasure to be able to pick up on the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry's comments considering Bill 85, An Act to strengthen and improve government—I can tell you, Speaker, having led the gas plant scandal hearings for those many years, that there's a lot of improvement that the government can have.

1750

Interjections.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: You can hear the mumbling and grumbling from the other side, because they do not like to have the fact brought forward that good government involves being open and transparent with the people of Ontario.

I can tell you, Speaker, as I came in and spent my entire summer—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Stop the clock, please. I think sometimes there are some key words that sometimes have a tendency of hitting some hot buttons, and certainly those key words have hit some hot buttons. I would ask the members on the government side to do their best to refrain from allowing those hot buttons to be pushed, and as a result of that, I will now turn it back to the member from Nipissing to continue with your two-minute comments.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. As I talk about good government, I am reminded of the summer I had to spend here in the Legislature instead of with my constituents at home. I'm reminded of the entire winter I spent here on the gas plant scandal hearings, as opposed to with our stakeholders and constituents at home.

It's all about the time that the government told us they would bring all of the documents to the Legislature: "You have all the documents." That was 36,000 documents. If there was good government, you would realize that today we have 300,000 documents, so I guess maybe we didn't quite get all the documents when they swore—many of them under oath—that we have all the documents.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: You were there every day, Vic.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Every day. From 36,000 documents the first time, two weeks later, it was, "Oops, we missed quite a few dozen boxes here. Here are 20,000 more documents." That brought us up to 56,000 documents. Now we're at 300,000—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I need to remind members, as well, that if you want to engage across the floor, that you must be sitting in your own seat. For that reason, just a gentle reminder right now. Thank you very much.

Back to the member, once again, from Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. Obviously, this is a government that knows nothing—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: A point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): A point of order: the member from Windsor–Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I was listening very intently to the member from Nipissing. Unfortunately, his last 20 or 30 seconds, I couldn't hear a word because of chatter from the other side. I wonder if you can roll back the clock so I hear what he had to say.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): That's not a point of order, but I appreciate you bringing that forward. I'd like to say I can go back to the member from Nipissing; however, time has expired.

Further questions and comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I want to thank the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry for his comments about this kind of clearing house bill that seeks to "improve"—that was the key word from the member

from Burlington. I don't know that it necessarily will improve or does improve, but when I go through the first few pieces and have a look at it—subsection 86.1 is to remove the requirement for the AG from the process of appointing a case management master who has reached the age of 65, 10 years after the fact when legislation was passed to allow people to work past age 65.

You would think that when the government is changing legislation, that they would look at the entire piece of legislation and other pieces of legislation that are impacted to—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: A good government would do that.

Ms. Cindy Forster: A good government would do that, that's right, and they would actually address those kinds of issues.

The Provincial Offences Act allows documents to be filed with the court electronically. We have been in the electronic age for 20 years at least. I can remember 20 years ago they dropped a computer on my desk and said, "Learn how to use it." And yet we still can't file electronic documents around any of these areas that we're looking at in this legislation. Cancellation and suspension of driver's licences: We're now saying you can use courier, mail, fax and prescribed electronic means of transportation. So what is that? What does that mean? Can you text? Can you email? This is seeking to improve, but it's really not providing very much clarity when you actually get right down into the meat of the changes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much to the member from Welland.

Now back to the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry for final comments.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I thank the members from Windsor–Tecumseh, Burlington, Nipissing and Welland.

Obviously, we touched some buttons. I noticed on the gas plant scandal that most of the chirping came from people who weren't here at the time. They're like the general public: They wouldn't know what happened because it seems to be all locked up in a vault somewhere. I know the OPP is still trying to find out just what records were deleted—illegally, I guess. The OPP investigation is going on. That's the type of good government that this government is talking about?

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, second time.

Mr. Jim McDonell: We're looking at a government here that has done everything they can to make sure people don't find out. They talk about being transparent; it's anything but. And I think that—

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Point of order—stop the clock. We have a point of order?

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I would ask that the member opposite bring the topic back to the subject matter at hand. While we don't object to him taking it sideways, Speaker, I would ask that he stick to the matter at hand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member from Burlington for bringing that to my attention. I have been listening attentively, and I believe that he is on course.

Back to the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry to wrap it up.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Anybody who talks about a bill strengthening and improving government when they're in such a bad state is opening themselves up to criticism. I mean, one would have to laugh at the title here, because obviously, we're talking about trying to bring things into the electronic age. I don't disagree with them wanting to stay away from the electronic age, because when they touch IT projects, they cost billions and nothing comes out of them. Children's aid is the latest problem we've had with this government. So just stay away from that stuff because it just costs a lot of money.

The member for Nipissing talked about maybe what he considers a waste of time during the summer, but it certainly was important to the people of Ontario to know where these billions of dollars are being wasted. A government that tries to—I can't use the word "mislead" in this House, but it seems to me that when you talk about projects that are \$40 million but they're turning out to be billions, that's not transparent.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

STEEL INDUSTRY

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member for Haldimand–Norfolk has given notice of dissatisfaction with an answer to a question given today by the Minister of Finance. The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance will, in fact, fill in for the minister. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

The member from Haldimand–Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I appreciate the opportunity to ask some further questions about US Steel Canada's pensions, the health benefits and, as well, looking forward, the opportunity to restructure the plant and equipment that we have in both Hamilton and Lake Erie at Nanticoke.

Further to my question this morning, we know that, as of October 9, retirees and family members can no longer file claims for health, medical, prescriptions and dental insurance benefits as a result of the court decision.

On October 9, to their credit—and this is a start—the government of Ontario announced it was providing \$3 million for a transitional fund. The fund is intended to

help ensure that, over the next six months, retirees have support to address critical health needs and to help them transition to available programs, such as the Trillium Drug Program. The fund is administered with the support of both US Steel Canada and representatives of the union and salaried employees.

I've also been told that information sessions for retirees and their dependents will be organized to assist those who may qualify for the Trillium Drug Program. I will point out—I was given information—they don't need to wait for these information sessions. There's a 1-800 number that I've been giving out to a lot of former Stelco-US Steel people I've been speaking with. I'll read it into the record: 1-800-575-5386. If they have more questions, I have also been passing on the email: trillium@ontariodruginbenefit.ca.

1800

Ontario has announced a \$3-million transitional health benefit fund. However, across Haldimand-Norfolk, Niagara and the Hamilton area, we have something like 20,000 vulnerable retirees who are struggling with the grim reality that over the years they were asked to take pensions and pension increases in place of wage increases. As we collaborate on how best to support 20,000 US Steel Canada retirees, we can take a look at what this government has done before: Think of the auto industry. As a result of the 2009 recession, we all worked to support the auto industry. The Ontario government provided \$4.6 billion to bail out both GM and Chrysler and their pensioners. The federal government contributed \$9 billion; the US government contributed \$66 billion.

As I asked this morning, apart from supporting US Steel Canada's restructuring process and apart from the transition fund, what specifically will this government be offering to pensioners at US Steel Canada? And we know that in his answer, Minister Sousa threw blame at the federal government for not releasing details of the agreement.

Speaker, the reason I asked for this late show debate was to facilitate a more fulsome discussion of my supplementary question this morning; namely, just what are the plans and action steps being actively pursued in conjunction with this government's strategy to support Ontario's steel industry, more specifically the restructuring of US Steel?

Obviously, much uncertainty remains with respect to future courses of action. As I indicated this morning, Lake Erie Works employees are vigorously pursuing new orders, rooting out waste and inefficiency. The assets are in play: land, plant, equipment, in whole or in part for any available investment, for any bidders—valuable assets. The coke oven, hot strip mill, galvanizing line and large acreages at both Hamilton and Lake Erie Works are all worthy of investment: at US Steel Hamilton, something like 800 acres; there are thousands of acres down at the Lake Erie Works. They're in an excellent position geographically on the seaway—proximity to Toronto.

We know that bankruptcy proceedings are complete; the process can begin. We understand that some com-

panies could be interested. Again the question: What is this government doing to expedite the process? I refer specifically to the opportunities for restructuring.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I turn it back over now to the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance for her comments.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I want to, first of all, apologize for my voice. It is not the best it's ever been. I'm battling a cold so, please, I hope that the member from Haldimand-Norfolk will bear with me, as well as whoever is watching at home, and you, obviously, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the member for pursuing this late show and for asking for more information. As he knows, although the court proceedings are still ongoing, our government remains committed to working with all stakeholders. Our goal is to achieve long-term viability of the Canadian operations, but more importantly to ensure the best possible outcome for employees, retirees, suppliers, customers and all interested parties in this matter.

While this effort is still ongoing, our government wants to ensure that over the next six months the retirees that the member from Haldimand-Norfolk spoke about have the support that they need to address critical health needs and to help them transition to available programs such as the Trillium Drug Program. To this end, the Ontario government is providing, as mentioned, \$3 million for the establishment of a transitional fund administered with the support of US Steel Canada and representatives of the union and the salaried employees. The fund is intended to help ensure that, over the next six months, the retirees have this critical support, especially towards their health needs.

Details of the fund will be made available shortly. However, the province is working closely with representatives of the union and salaried employees, on behalf of the retirees, the company and the monitor, to develop the program's parameters. As the restructuring continues, it is important to remember that the company is still operating and retirees are still receiving their pensions.

We are pleased with the developments that have taken place in the Court of Appeal with respect to the decision for the court to hear arguments on unsealing the federal government's secret agreement with US Steel. Throughout this process, our government has been at the table, working to help ensure the best possible outcome for the community and for all Ontarians. Our government's top concern—I repeat: top concern—has always been and continues to be for all employees, retirees and families who are affected by this situation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'd like to thank the member from Haldimand-Norfolk and the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance for their comments and responses.

It is now time for this House to adjourn until tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock.

The House adjourned at 1807.

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Continued from back cover

Visitors

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....	5780
Hon. James J. Bradley.....	5780

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	5781
Mrs. Lisa Gretzky	5781

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Community Health and Wellbeing Week

Mr. Jeff Yurek.....	5781
---------------------	------

Peggy Nash

Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....	5781
-----------------------	------

Members of Parliament

Mr. Lou Rinaldi.....	5781
----------------------	------

Navratri

Mr. Steve Clark.....	5782
----------------------	------

Women in politics

Ms. Catherine Fife.....	5782
-------------------------	------

Defibrillation equipment

Mr. Arthur Potts.....	5782
-----------------------	------

Ontario Environment Industry Association

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	5783
----------------------------	------

Turkish Canadian community

Mr. Shafiq Qadri	5783
------------------------	------

Halton Equitable Drug Strategy

Ms. Eleanor McMahon.....	5783
--------------------------	------

Private members' public business

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....	5783
------------------------------------	------

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES / RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS

Standing Committee on Government Agencies

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....	5784
Report deemed adopted.....	5784

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

563523 Ontario Limited Act, 2015, Bill Pr29,

Mrs. Martow	
First reading agreed to.....	5784

1064514 Ontario Inc. Act, 2015, Bill Pr30,

Mrs. Martow	
First reading agreed to.....	5784

MOTIONS

Sign-language interpretation

Hon. Jeff Leal.....	5784
Motion agreed to	5784

Private members' public business

Hon. Jeff Leal.....	5784
Motion agreed to	5784

Private members' public business

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....	5784
------------------------------------	------

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

National Disability Employment Awareness Month

Hon. Brad Duguid	5784
Mr. Monte McNaughton	5785
Miss Monique Taylor.....	5786

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Lake Nipissing walleye fishery

Mr. Victor Fedeli.....	5787
------------------------	------

Environmental protection

Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	5787
-------------------------	------

Hospital funding

Mr. Jim Wilson.....	5787
---------------------	------

Environmental protection

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky.....	5788
------------------------	------

Hydro rates

Mr. Jim Wilson.....	5788
---------------------	------

Privatization of public assets

Mme France Gélinas	5788
--------------------------	------

Lung health

Mr. Grant Crack	5789
-----------------------	------

Taxation

Mr. Jim Wilson.....	5789
---------------------	------

Gasoline prices

Mme France Gélinas	5789
--------------------------	------

Lung health

Mr. Lou Rinaldi.....	5789
----------------------	------

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Invasive Species Act, 2015, Bill 37, Mr. Mauro / Loi de 2015 sur les espèces envahissantes, projet de loi 37, M. Mauro

Ms. Eleanor McMahon.....	5790
Mr. Jack MacLaren	5792
Mr. John Vanthof.....	5793

Mr. Jeff Yurek	5794
Mr. Percy Hatfield	5796
Mr. Robert Bailey	5798
Mme France Gélinas.....	5799
Mr. Bill Walker.....	5801
Third reading vote deferred	5803
Strengthening and Improving Government Act, 2015, Bill 85, Mme Meilleur / Loi de 2015 sur le renforcement et l'amélioration de la gestion publique, projet de loi 85, Mme Meilleur	
Mr. Jim McDonell	5803
Mr. Percy Hatfield	5805
Ms. Eleanor McMahon	5806
Mr. Victor Fedeli	5806
Ms. Cindy Forster	5806
Mr. Jim McDonell	5807
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	5807

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE / DÉBAT SUR LA MOTION D'AJOURNEMENT

Steel industry

Mr. Toby Barrett.....	5807
Mrs. Laura Albanese.....	5808

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Tuesday 20 October 2015 / Mardi 20 octobre 2015

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Police Record Checks Reform Act, 2015, Bill 113, Mr. Naqvi / Loi de 2015 sur la réforme des vérifications de dossiers de police, projet de loi 113, M. Naqvi	
Mr. Randy Hillier	5761
Ms. Cindy Forster	5763
Ms. Soo Wong	5763
Mr. Steve Clark	5763
Mr. John Vanthof	5764
Mr. Randy Hillier	5764
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	5764
Mr. Bas Balkissoon	5767
Sylvia Jones	5767
Ms. Cindy Forster	5768
Mr. Granville Anderson	5768
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	5768
Mrs. Kathryn McGarry	5768
Ms. Eleanor McMahon	5769
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	5770

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn	5770
Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	5770
Hon. Helena Jaczek	5770
Mrs. Gila Martow	5770
Mr. Peter Tabuns	5770
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	5770
Mr. Victor Fedeli	5770
Miss Monique Taylor	5770
Mr. John Fraser	5770
Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	5770
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	5770
Hon. Glen R. Murray	5770
Ms. Soo Wong	5770
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	5770

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Hydro rates	
Mr. John Yakabuski	5771
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	5771

Privatization of public assets

Mr. Todd Smith	5772
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	5772

Privatization of public assets

Ms. Andrea Horwath	5773
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	5773
Hon. Charles Sousa	5773

Privatization of public assets

Ms. Andrea Horwath	5774
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	5774

Ontario economy

Mr. Victor Fedeli	5774
Hon. Charles Sousa	5774
Hon. Deborah Matthews	5775

Hydro rates

Mr. Peter Tabuns	5775
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	5775

Arts and culture

Ms. Ann Hoggarth	5776
Hon. Michael Coteau	5776

Steel industry

Mr. Toby Barrett	5776
Hon. Charles Sousa	5776

Automobile insurance

Mr. Wayne Gates	5777
Hon. Charles Sousa	5777

Government regulations

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry	5777
Hon. David Orazietti	5777

Wind turbines

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	5778
Hon. Glen R. Murray	5778

Domestic violence

Ms. Peggy Sattler	5779
Hon. Madeleine Meilleur	5779

Rural infrastructure

Mr. Lou Rinaldi	5779
Hon. Jeff Leal	5779

Access to justice

Mr. Randy Hillier	5780
Hon. Madeleine Meilleur	5780

Notice of dissatisfaction

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	5780
-------------------------------------	------

Continued on inside back cover

